

Academic Integrity Policy

1. Introduction and Overview of the Policy

The learning community of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary seeks to live with honesty, forthrightness, and transparency in all of our actions, following Jesus' admonition to "Let your **yes** mean **yes**, and your **no** mean **no**. Anything more than this comes from the evil one." (Matt 5:37). We expect all employees, students, and the board of directors to contribute to this community by upholding the values of telling the truth, being trustworthy, extending trust, and practicing moral integrity.

As a learning community we count academic integrity as a specific expression of these values that guides the ways in which we complete our assignments or tasks, fulfill our responsibilities, teach, acquire knowledge, assess our work, carry out our research, present our scholarship and reports, and represent ourselves to those inside and beyond our community. We stand with other schools that count honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, respect, and courage as primary characteristics of academic integrity.¹

The following definitions and procedures set out in this policy apply to all AMBS faculty, Administrators, staff, and students. We acknowledge our commitment to act responsibly and help to sustain the integrity of the AMBS community.

2. Types of Academic Misconduct

- A. *Cheating: Offenses that create an unfair academic advantage for the individual or a group. This includes offenses such as:*
- Copying the work of another student or colleague
 - Gaining unauthorized access to exams, research, or findings
 - Submitting or using falsified data
 - Misrepresenting needs for accommodation
 - Using unauthorized sources or devices to obtain information required for tests, presentations, or reports.
- B. *Plagiarism: Failing to reference previous work used in the creation of a new work. This includes offenses such as:*
- Deliberately presenting the ideas, language, or original work of another person as one's own
 - Incorporating someone else's work without indicating the name of the original author, composer, artist, or designer or the original source of work including internet content
 - Failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas including proper use of quotation marks in written text

¹T. Fishman, editor, *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity*, Second Edition. (International Center for Academic Integrity, Clemson University, 2012). The Second Edition of the Fundamental Values is licensed by the International Center for Academic Integrity under Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

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- Reusing one's own previously published work in new publications without reference to the previous publication
 - Students using the same work for an assignment in one course for an assignment in a second course without permission
 - Failing to follow standard practices for attributing copyrighted or borrowed words, music, or visual art in worship, public presentations, conferences, commencement, etc.
- C. *Collusion: Receiving or providing assistance that is not commonly available to other individuals in the community and/or is not acknowledged. This includes offenses such as:*
- Helping another student or colleague with assignments or projects that would give her or him unfair advantage or misrepresent her or his skills
 - Sharing confidential or inappropriately obtained information
 - Restricting or not sharing information resulting in unfair advantage
 - Doing the work of another student or colleague that is to be evaluated.
- D. *Sabotaging the work of others: Taking action to diminish another's work or maintaining patterns of inaction that impede another's work. This includes offenses such as:*
- Destroying the work of others in the academic community
 - Unreasonably delaying review, editing, or publication processes
 - Unjustly discrediting the work of others in the academic community and placing them in an unfair disadvantage for grades, advancement, resources, or prestige
 - Systematic failure to fulfill responsibilities that puts students or academic peers at a disadvantage.
- E. *Research misconduct: Failure to conduct research according to best practices of academic ethics. This includes offenses such as:*
- Fabricating or falsifying research outcomes
 - Asserting claims that are not substantiated in the evidence or documentation
 - Faculty claiming the work of students as their own
 - Using research methods that do harm to people, animals, the community, and/or the environment
 - Research that fails to solicit and document appropriate consent from research subjects and/or exploits vulnerable population groups.
- F. *Inappropriate uses of technology: Using technology in ways that violate legal standards or the ethical norms of the AMBS community. This includes offenses such:*
- Using computers, phones, or other devices to gain unlicensed access to information
 - Using information obtained through technological devices that gives the user unfair advantage and misrepresents the actual level of one's knowledge or skills

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- Consulting technological devices in a setting in which they have been prohibited, e.g., in a testing or classroom environment
 - Failure to follow governmental regulations.
- G. *Altering records, changing records without authorization, unauthorized sharing of records, or falsifying records. This includes offenses such as:*
- Changing information in database record systems that misrepresents the identity of a student or an employee, her or his actual experience, or his or her demonstrated ability
 - Changing student grades under duress or seeking other kinds of advantage
 - Withholding information that belongs in official records
 - Changing financial records
 - Changing records in research projects to give more favorable outcomes
 - Disclosing records without proper authorization.
- H. *False identity: Misrepresenting oneself and one's own work. This includes offenses such as:*
- Submitting a resume or curriculum vitae with inaccurate or fabricated information about identity, education, or work experience
 - Hiring a proxy to complete and submit assignments or projects for courses
 - Completing course assignments or projects for another student for pay.

3. Frequent Causes of Academic Misconduct and the Loss of Integrity

Many situations or conditions can give rise to academic misconduct and must be addressed forthrightly and in a timely manner.

- A. Not all cultures hold the same ethical understandings of what it means to use the intellectual work of others. There are different means for attributing knowledge that have contributed to one's thinking. This policy represents values upheld in schools of post-secondary education in Canada and the United States. Often international students are not aware of the need for making citations or do not know the citations standards recognized in the US or Canada. Both the school and the students bear responsibility for ensuring that quotations or borrowed intellectual property are properly cited.
- B. Sloppy research and writing practices cause serious mistakes in attribution. Students and faculty frequently copy and paste text between electronic documents without noting the source, have trouble with accurate paraphrasing, or fail to use recognized citation styles or abbreviations. Poor handwriting and transcription or a failure to maintain complete research records can also lead to academic misconduct. In the seminary environment, lack of attention to citations in sermon texts is frequently a cause of trouble.
- C. Failure to use available resources that outline best research practices including how to utilize software tools to organize research, keeping track of sources and citations, and reviewing style guide for research papers. (*The AMBS library*)

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provide resources strengthening research habits, using citation management tools, and utilizing Turabian standards for writing papers.)

- D. Students, teachers, or employees may recognize that they are not knowledgeable or skilled enough to complete their assignments adequately. In the face of failure, they find it tempting to borrow the work of others without acknowledging they have done so.
- E. Poor time management or other time pressures can contribute to the fear of failing an important assignment, report, or presentation. This situation makes the possibility of using the work of others without acknowledgment or fabricating information a strong temptation.
- F. Students and employees may have strong tendencies toward personal perfectionism; a personal sense of identity becomes bound up in the need to be right and flawless. The reality that one's work will not be perfect becomes unbearable to imagine for those who suffer from perfectionism. Opportunities to cheat, plagiarize, or fabricate data are tempting.
- G. In some school cultures, the competition for grades, benefits, funding, recognition, or prestige is very strong. Students and employees may sabotage other's work, withhold the resources needed to complete assignments, and steal or restrict the use of needed resources (e.g., books, technology, information, departmental budget) that puts other students or employees at a decided disadvantage. Competition between schools or organizations may encourage the spread of misinformation.
- H. Increasing numbers of students in post-secondary and graduate schools believe they are entitled to a degree without doing the work required to earn one. They pay individuals or companies to take on their identity and complete all the work of the course for them. This behavior is widespread in the online learning environment with entire courses being completed by someone other than the registered student. On-campus students sometimes use services to write their papers or take tests for them.
- I. Some employees misrepresent themselves on their resumes or curriculum vitae claiming degrees they have not completed or obtained fraudulently, scholarship they have not produced, or work experience that they do not have.
- J. Students and employees may violate copyright laws by reproducing more text than is allowed under Fair Use understandings or using musical or visual illustrations in their materials for assignments, reports, or presentations without permission.
- K. Occasionally, students and employees are simply not prepared or able to complete competently the work asked of them. Rather than face embarrassment, they utilize the work of others. This could mean publishing work or hiring others to do their work while submitting it under their name.

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While all of these situations of temptation are understandable at a basic human level, academic misconduct demonstrates a lack of personal, academic, and moral integrity and is not tolerated at AMBS.

4. Definitions of academic misconduct related to levels of seriousness

- A. This policy recognizes the difference between unintentional, and usually small, errors caused by distractions, misunderstandings, confusion, or fatigue. These do not fall under the normal causes of academic misconduct.
- B. Minor offense. A minor first offense often appears in the form of mistakes resulting from sloppiness or negligence. Plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, inappropriate uses of technology, and altering records without due caution may be considered minor offenses. It is not the willful intent of the student or the employee to deceive or to gain benefit from claiming work that is not their own, restricting the use of resources, or making a mistake in record keeping or reporting. (International students and North American students who do not have a strong humanities background may be at greater risk for committing minor offenses.)
- C. Second minor offense. A second minor offense results from sloppiness, negligence, or failure to have learned proper research and recording practices without evidence of the students' or employee's intent to deceive.
- D. Serious offense. Reports of serious offenses of academic misconduct by students or employees demonstrate willful intent to deceive by leveraging advantage for grades, resources, promotions, or privileges. Cheating, sabotage, research misconduct, and false identity are always considered serious offenses. Such offenses will be thoroughly documented. A third documented minor offense during the student's or employee's tenure is treated as a serious offense.

5. Consequences and Range of Sanctions

Intervention for student violations within the context of a course begins with the Professor. Suspected violations by students outside of courses are reported to the Academic Dean. Suspected employee violations are reported to the employee and the employee's Supervisor at the same time.

If students or employees disclose an instance of misconduct in a confidential conversation, the listening advisor, campus pastor, spiritual director, colleague, or friend should direct them to report their violation to the Academic Dean or to their Supervisor. A follow-up conversation to check on the reporting actions taken is recommended.

AMBS personnel (Professors in the case of students and Supervisors in the case of employees) will gather evidence and document all cases of academic misconduct in detail (see section 6). All situations that violate academic integrity, whether by students or employees, will be addressed with a range of sanctions, corresponding to the seriousness of the offense.

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A. Students

1. Failing assignment, project, exam with or without opportunity to redo the work
 - a. Professors who suspect or have determined that a student has committed a minor offense will present the student with the evidence of the misconduct and help her or him to understand the significance of the infraction. The Professors will give a failing grade on that assignment, project, or exam.
 - b. The incident is reported to the Academic Dean, who follows up with the student. The Academic Dean and Professor determine together if the student may be given the opportunity to resubmit corrected work or be given a different but similar assignment. If it is the student's first minor offense (section 4, part B) and the cause of the misconduct warrants, the Academic Dean will refer the student to remedial assistance from library, information technology, and/or writing services.
 - c. The Academic Dean keeps an email record of the communications between the Professors and the student. The incident is reported to the student's advisor.
2. Failing the course
 - a. Professors who have determined that a student has committed a second minor offense (section 4, part C) will confront the student with the evidence of misconduct, and the student will fail the course.
 - b. The incident is reported to the Academic Dean, who confirms with the student that he or she has failed the course and indicates that a report of the violation will go into the student's record.
 - c. The Academic Dean will keep an email record of the communications among the Professors, the student, the student's advisor, and the Registrar's office. Official records are kept by the Registrar.
 - d. If there is sufficient evidence demonstrating that the student did not understand the nature of the misconduct and takes immediate direct action to understand the breach in academic integrity, the Professor in consultation with the Academic Dean may allow the student to resubmit a corrected assignment or a different but similar assignment with the student receiving the lowest possible passing grade for the course.
3. Short-term suspension and Review Team Process
 - a. All serious forms of academic misconduct (section 4, part D) committed by students and reported by Professors will result in a suspension that may last up to two weeks. The Academic Dean will

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carry out the process of gathering evidence for all cases involving students.

- b. A review team comprised of the Academic Dean, the MA Program Directors or the MDiv Director, the Registrar, and a current student will review the case in the presence of the accused student and will make a judgment based on the evidence gathered by the Academic Dean.
 - c. If the accused student is exonerated of the misconduct charge, he or she may resume class attendance and assignments in all courses and may apply for course extensions at the end of the term if required.
4. Termination of student status at AMBS
 - a. Any student found culpable of a serious or repeated incidence of academic misconduct by a review team will have his or her student status at AMBS terminated. Termination is immediate following the determination of the review team.
 - b. A “W” will be entered on the student’s transcript for all of the courses in which she or he is registered in that term. The student will be responsible for paying back all federal financial aid grants received for the term.

B. AMBS Employees

1. Rectifying errant work
 - a. Supervisors who suspect that a supervisee has committed a form of academic misconduct will immediately present the employee with the evidence and seek corrections to the work.
 - b. The Supervisor will ensure that the supervisee understands clearly the significance of the issue and provide any additional training that may be required to prevent a second instance of misconduct.
 - c. The Supervisor will refer the employee to appropriate support services, such as library or technology training, depending on the cause of misconduct (Section 3).
2. Delay of promotion process
 - a. Supervisors who suspect that a supervisee (Faculty, Administrator, or Staff) has committed repeated acts of academic misconduct or a first serious form of misconduct will immediately present the employee with the evidence of the infraction.
 - b. The incident is noted in the employee’s personnel file.
 - c. The Supervisor and supervisee will determine whether future misconduct can be prevented with increased supervision and/or additional training.
 - d. The misconduct and the employee’s efforts to address it will be considered in the next review process and may cause delay in advancement or raise in pay.
3. Short-term suspension and review team process

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- a. All serious forms of academic misconduct (section 4, part D) committed by faculty, Administrators or Staff may result in a suspension lasting up to two weeks.
- b. Teaching, Affiliate, and Adjunct Faculty
 - i. The Academic Dean will carry out the process of gathering evidence in all cases involving teaching faculty (including affiliate, adjunct, and sessional faculty) to determine the veracity and extent of the infraction.
 - ii. In the case of misconduct by a Teaching Faculty member, the Academic Dean will carry out evidential research to determine the veracity and extent of the infraction.
 - iii. A review team will consist of the Academic Dean, an Administrative Cabinet member, and two Teaching Faculty members from areas outside of the accused Professor's departmental assignment. If the Professor is exonerated of the misconduct charge, he or she may return immediately to all teaching and community responsibilities.
- c. Administrators and Staff
 - i. Supervisors of other Administrators or Staff will carry out evidential research to determine the veracity and extent of the infraction.
 - ii. A review team consisting of the Supervisor, an Administrative Cabinet member, an Administrative Faculty member and/or a Staff member from outside of the accused employee's assigned area.
 - iii. If the employee is exonerated of the misconduct charge, he or she may return immediately to the appointed position. If he or she is found culpable of the misconduct, the employee may continue on suspension for a specified period of time.
4. Terminations of employment
 - a. Any AMBS employee found culpable of a serious or repeated incidence of academic misconduct will have his or her employment status at AMBS terminated immediately following the determination of the review team or at the end of the current academic term.

6. Documentation

- A. Student Misconduct
 1. Minor incidents of academic misconduct committed by students are recorded in the Academic Dean's office and destroyed after the student has completed studies at AMBS, assuming that there are no more infractions during the period of the student's study.
 2. Any serious or repeated infraction of academic misconduct, for which the student is proven culpable, will be recorded in the student's permanent academic record. All notes from the evidentiary research and the meeting(s) with the accused student will also become part of their permanent record.

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- B. Faculty, Administrator, or Staff Misconduct
 - 1. Minor incidents of misconduct committed by any AMBS employee will be noted by their Supervisors and discussed at the end of the current review cycle. If there are no other infractions during this cycle, no records will be kept in the employee file.
 - 2. Any serious or repeated infractions of academic misconduct for which the employee is proven culpable will be recorded in the employee's permanent personnel file. All notes from the evidentiary research and the meeting(s) with the accused employee will also become part of their permanent record.

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7. Processes of Appeal and Academic Grievance Procedure

A. First Level of Appeal

1. Students

- a. Students, who believe that they have been falsely accused of academic misconduct, are encouraged to speak with their Professor(s) and offer concrete evidence to refute the accusation that has been made against them.
- b. If the evidence is accepted as valid by the Professor(s), the accusation may be dropped after a verbal report to the Academic Dean. If the evidence is not persuasive to the Professor(s) or accepted as valid, the reporting and research process outlined above (section 5, part A.3) begins.
- c. Professors(s) or students may consult with the student's advisor and/or Academic Dean.

2. AMBS employees

- a. Faculty, Administrators, or Staff, who believe that they have been falsely accused of academic misconduct, are encouraged to speak with their Supervisors and offer concrete evidence to refute the accusation that has been made against them.
- b. If the evidence is accepted as valid, the accusation is dropped. If the evidence is not persuasive to the Supervisor or accepted as valid, the reporting and research process outlined above (section 5, part B.3) begins.
- c. The employee and the Supervisor may consult the HR and Payroll Assistant, a member of the Administrative Cabinet, or his or her own Supervisor.

B. Second Level of Appeal - All Grievants

1. If a student or any AMBS employee disputes the outcome of their review team's deliberations and determinations (as outlined in sections 5, parts A.3 and B.3), he or she may follow the process outlined below, which is a modified version of the Level Three process in the AMBS Grievance Policy.
2. The student or employee should contact the HR and Payroll Assistant to set the grievance process in motion.
3. Upon receiving a request for grievance process for academic misconduct, the HR and Payroll Assistant (or appointee) will prepare a timeline (a) for reviewing the documentation already gathered; (b) for the process by the carried out by the AMBS grievance team and (c) for making any subsequent appeals.

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4. The grievance team, appointed in accordance with the AMBS grievance policy, will review the statements submitted by the grievant (student or employee) and the Academic Dean in the case of students or Professors or the Supervisor of an employee and determine needed next steps in the investigative process.
5. This investigation will review relevant evidence, such as email communications or other written or graphic communication, interviews with witnesses, legal implications of the alleged misconduct, factors in AMBS community life that facilitated or encouraged the offense, or anything else deemed relevant in understanding the complaint.
6. The HR and Payroll Assistant (or appointee) will communicate any new information that has emerged from this part of the investigation to the grievant and the Academic Dean or Supervisor in an orderly and timely way.
7. Working with the grievant and Academic Dean or Supervisor, the HR and Payroll Assistant (or appointee) will develop a schedule for meetings to hear testimony from the grievant, the Academic Dean or Supervisor, and any others whose experiences or expertise may be relevant to the complaint. This schedule will take into consideration the physical and psychological safety of the grievant and the Academic Dean or Supervisor.
8. Meetings with the grievance team, the grievant and the Academic Dean or Supervisor, will follow this outline:
 - a. The HR and Payroll Assistant (or appointee), serving as convener of the meeting, will state clearly the discussion procedure for the meeting and ensure that both of the primary parties (grievant and Academic Dean or Supervisor) have equal opportunity to be heard and understood, and that both are actively involved in establishing the facts of the complaint.
 - b. The HR and Payroll Assistant (or appointee) will make clear that the preponderance of evidence is the standard by which decisions related to the offense will be made.
 - c. An orderly, full, frank, and fair conversation about the offense will allow the grievance team to come to a fuller understanding of the complaint, to determine what happened.
 - d. The HR and Payroll Assistant (or appointees) will summarize verbally the findings, understandings, and/or decisions reached during the meeting.
 - e. If further meetings are required, subsequent meeting times will be set before the conclusion of the meeting or agreements made for follow-up scheduling.
 - f. The grievance team will review all that have been learned from interview process, make a judgment on the grievance, and determine

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if any disciplinary actions or sanctions, if rendered, are appropriate and should be enforced.

- g. The HR and Payroll Assistant (or appointee) will make a written summary of the meeting and make it available to the grievance team, the grievant, and Academic Dean or Supervisor within five working days of the meeting.
9. Process Summary
 - a. Within ten working days, the HR and Payroll Assistant (or appointee) will compile all meeting summaries, including documentation regarding the meeting schedule, resolutions proposed, and the success or failure of the procedure to come to a satisfactory resolution.
 - b. If the grievant is a student, this report will be filed in the student's permanent record in the Registrar's office regardless of whether the proposed resolution is deemed satisfactory.
 - c. If the grievant is an employee, this report will be filed in the office of the HR and Payroll Assistant, regardless of whether a proposed resolution is deemed satisfactory.

8. Appealing the Results of the Academic Grievance Process

If the grievance process fails to lead to a resolution satisfactory to all parties, the grievant or the Academic Dean or Supervisor may appeal to the AMBS President. He or she will read all the documentation produced to that point in the process and will meet with both parties. The President will use his or her judgment in determining whether to seek counsel from the AMBS Board Chair and/or other legal counsel. The decision of the President will be final.

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