

School of International Affairs Academic Complaint Process

The School of International Affairs (SIA) seeks to foster an environment of respect and integrity among students, faculty and staff. The following procedures address issues regarding grading, academic integrity, classroom behavior, conduct, and other academic situations.

I. Grade Mediation and Adjudication

1. If a student has a concern about a grade, as outlined in [Academic Administrative Policy G-10](#), the student should attempt to resolve these issues directly with the instructor.
2. If the problem remains unresolved, or if the student believes that the above course of action is inappropriate given the concerns, the student may seek recourse through the SIA Director. In attempting to resolve the issue, the SIA Director may consult with SIA staff.
3. If resolution does not occur, the student may request a formal grade adjudication process by filing a [Grade Adjudication Petition Form](#) with the SIA Director. The petition must be submitted no later than ten weeks following the end date of the course (as it appears in the Schedule of Courses). The basis for a grade adjudication petition is limited to cases in which a grade assignment does not conform to [Senate Policy 47-20](#) and therefore the petition must present clear evidence that the assignment of the grade was based upon factors other than the academic judgment of the instructor. The SIA Director will review the petition to determine if the student's complaint provides evidence that the instructor's assignment of the grade is in violation of Senate Policy 47-20.
 - a. If the SIA Director determines that the assignment of the grade does not violate Senate Policy 47-20, he/she will notify the student and the grade will stand.
 - b. If the SIA Director believes that the assignment of the grade does violate Senate Policy 47-20, he/she will solicit a response from the instructor. The instructor must respond within ten (10) days. If upon review of the instructor's response the SIA Director concludes that the grade assignment does not conform to Senate Policy 47-20, he/she will determine a course of action that may include a recommendation for an amended grade to be determined. The SIA Director will then provide the student and the instructor with notification of the instructor's response and a brief summary of the reasons for the recommended course of action.

In the case where the grade assignment was found to violate Senate Policy 47-20, the SIA director will assign the grade or appoint an ad hoc committee of 2-3 faculty with appropriate expertise in the disciplinary field to determine and recommend a grade. The SIA Director will notify the student and instructor of the recommended grade and the supporting rationale in accordance with Senate Policy 47-20. The recommended grade will be provided by the SIA Director to SIA Dean for transmittal to the University Registrar (if the grade change is recommended).

4. If the grade assignment was found to violate Senate Policy 47-20, the student or the instructor may appeal the determination of the SIA Director to the SIA Dean. An appeal to the Dean must be made in writing within ten (10) days of the receipt of the notification from the SIA Director. The petition and any relevant findings of the SIA Director will be forwarded to the SIA Dean.

- a. If the SIA Dean finds that the grade assignment does not conform to Senate Policy 47-20, the Dean will appoint an ad hoc committee of 2-3 faculty with appropriate expertise in the disciplinary field to determine and recommend a grade. The SIA Dean will then determine the grade and transmit it to the Registrar.
- b. If the SIA Dean finds that the grade assignment does conform to Senate Policy 47-20, the original grade assignment will stand and the adjudication process is concluded.

II. Academic Integrity Disputes

1. Issues related to misconduct in registered activities and other academic venues, and to academic sanctions (grading), will be dealt with as outlined in [Academic Integrity Policy 49-20](#) and [Procedures G-9](#).
2. When academic misconduct is suspected:
 - a. The faculty member informs the student of the allegation while taking into account the confidential nature of the information and the goal of maintaining an environment that supports teaching and learning.
 - b. When evidence suggests that academic misconduct has occurred, the faculty member will enter the charge and the academic sanction on the School of International Affairs [Academic Integrity Form](#), will sign the form, and then convey the charge and sanction to the student for his or her signature (in person or through other methods if necessary).
 - c. After reviewing the allegation of academic misconduct with the student, the faculty member may provide the student with an additional period of time (up to 14 days) before the student has to make a decision and sign the Academic Integrity Form as to whether or not to accept the academic sanction. A student's failure to sign and return the Academic Integrity Form, by the specified deadline, consistent with SIA procedures, will be construed as not contesting the charge or sanction and the adjudication process will go forward as defined by SIA procedures.
 - d. Normally, it is preferable to pursue academic sanctions within SIA, relying on the assignment of grades and course or program-related sanctions to support the learning process, rather than requesting additional University-level *disciplinary* sanctions. However, where integrity violations are considered to be extreme, the faculty member may also opt to pursue a disciplinary action in conjunction with both the SIA Academic Integrity Committee and the Office of Student Conduct. A more detailed and comprehensive listing of the types of academic sanctions faculty may assign to students on the Academic Integrity Form can be found in [Sanctioning Guidelines for Academic Integrity Violations](#).
 - e. Throughout the academic integrity process, the authority to administer academic sanctions remains the responsibility of the instructor and the SIA Academic Integrity Committee, as appropriate. In situations where a disciplinary sanction is requested and referred to the Office of Student Conduct, the application of academic sanctions will be carried out by SIA, while the application of any disciplinary sanctions will be carried out by the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee, in consultation with the Academic Integrity Committee of SIA.
 - f. Once a student has been informed that academic misconduct is suspected, the student may not drop the course during the adjudication process. The SIA Director or his or her representative is responsible for notifying the Office of the University Registrar when

consultation with the faculty member, wishes to maintain the original sanction, the case will be closed and sent on to the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee for record keeping. If the student is a member of the Schreyer Honors College, the Schreyer Honors College will be notified of the outcome of the case by the SIA Director or his or her representative.

- d. If the SIA Academic Integrity Committee Chair, in consultation with the faculty member, wishes to *maintain the originally assigned academic sanction but now add disciplinary sanction(s)* the College will assign the academic sanction and send a recommended disciplinary sanction to the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee along with the Academic Integrity Form and other relevant documentation. The Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee will meet with the student and review the recommendation, as well as precedent guidelines in determining the appropriate disciplinary sanction to assign. If the Student Conduct designee desires to reject the disciplinary recommendation, he/she must consult with the Director of SIA or his or her representative, which may include the chair of the Academic Integrity Committee.
 - e. If the SIA Academic Integrity Committee Chair, in consultation with the faculty member, wishes to *modify the originally assigned academic sanction to a more serious academic sanction, as well as add a disciplinary sanction*, a new form should be provided to the student and he/she should have the opportunity to accept or contest the charge given the increase in sanction. If the student accepts, the academic sanction will be assigned and a recommended disciplinary sanction will be sent to the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee along with the Academic Integrity Form and other relevant documentation. The Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee will review the recommendation, as well as precedent guidelines in determining the appropriate disciplinary sanction to assign. If the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee desires to reject the disciplinary recommendation, they must consult with the Director of SIA or his or her representative, which may include the chair of the Academic Integrity Committee.
 - f. Upon final disposition of the case, the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee will communicate the outcome to the SIA Academic Integrity Chair and/or the Director of SIA or his or her representative. If the student is a member of the Schreyer Honors College, the Schreyer Honors College will be notified of the final disposition by the Director of SIA or his or her representative.
4. If the Student Does Not Admit Responsibility for an Academic Integrity Violation:
- a. The faculty member asks the student to sign SIA's Academic Integrity Form indicating that the charge or sanction(s) is being contested and then forwards the form to the SIA Academic Integrity Committee Chair.
 - b. The SIA Academic Integrity Committee will conduct a review in accordance with their procedures.
 - c. If the student is found responsible for the alleged misconduct by the Academic Integrity committee, the committee will then be informed if the student has prior Academic Integrity violations. This information will be obtained from Student Conduct by the Director of SIA or his or her representative but not made available to the Academic Integrity Committee until the determination of responsibility occurs. With this information, the Academic Integrity Committee will determine the sanction to be assigned. If the sanction is only an academic sanction, the Academic Integrity Committee will assign the final charge and sanction and close the case. The Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee will be notified of the outcome for record-keeping. If the student is a member of the Schreyer Honors College, the Schreyer Honors

College will be notified of the final disposition by the Director of SIA or his or her representative.

- d. If the Academic Integrity Committee determines that disciplinary sanctions should be considered, the student is notified by SIA that he/she has been found responsible for the charge, and that the academic sanction will be put into place. In addition, the student's case will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee for consideration of a disciplinary sanction. The Academic Integrity committee will also send their recommendation for a disciplinary sanction.
 - e. When communicating with a student who has been found responsible by an Academic Integrity Committee and has been recommended for disciplinary sanctions, the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee will review precedent guidelines, as well as the Academic Integrity Committee's recommendation, in determining the appropriate disciplinary sanction to assign. If the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee desires to reject the disciplinary recommendation, they must consult with the Director of SIA or his or her representative, which may include the chair of the Academic Integrity Committee.
 - f. If the student is found not responsible for the alleged misconduct by the Academic Integrity committee, the Director of SIA or his or her representative is responsible for notifying the Office of the University Registrar that academic misconduct has not occurred in the course. The student may drop or withdraw from the course at any time.
5. Sanctions:
- a. Faculty may assign a wide range of sanctions to a student found responsible for violating academic integrity. Most faculty may choose to utilize *academic* sanctions (the modification of grades due to misconduct), but when referring cases to Student Conduct, faculty have the option to also recommend a full range of *disciplinary* sanctions available to Student Conduct such as: Disciplinary Warning; Disciplinary Probation; Suspension, Indefinite Expulsion or Expulsion; or the "XF" transcript notation (see: [Sanctioning Guidelines for Academic Integrity Violations and Explanations for Disciplinary Sanctions](#)).
 - b. "XF" sanctions are assigned only after consultation with the instructor, the campus or college Academic Integrity Committee, and Student Conduct. Assigning an "XF" notation to a student's transcript should be a rare occurrence and is reserved for the most serious breaches of academic integrity, which may include repeat misconduct.
 - c. With any recommendation to Student Conduct for an XF grade, the SIA Academic Integrity Committee must include those conditions (if any) under which it would approve the removal of the "XF" sanction from the transcript. Student Conduct will consider this recommendation when deciding upon the length of time that the "XF" notation will remain on the student's transcript. When the conditions (if any) are met for removal of the "XF", an academic "F" will remain on the transcript. Such conditions must reflect both the circumstances of the individual case and consultation among the instructor, the SIA Academic Integrity Committee, and the Office of Student Conduct.
 - d. Through the Student Conduct process the student will be able to request a sanction review for the disciplinary sanction assigned, but not for the academic sanction assigned. Once the student is found responsible in the process, the academic sanction recommended by the faculty and/or the Academic Integrity Committee will be put into place. The only exception occurs when the academic sanction assigned by the faculty member or the Academic Integrity Committee is a dismissal from the academic program. On those occasions, students may request a sanction review from the Dean of SIA or his or her representative. A student assigned any level of disciplinary sanction will have the right to request a sanction review from the Office of Student Conduct or the Student Conduct designee.

6. Schreyer Honors College Students:
 - a. When SIA finds a Schreyer Scholar has committed, or has not contested, academic misconduct, the Schreyer Honors College is notified and will respond through an internal process that may lead to dismissal from the Schreyer Honors College.

III. Classroom Situations (exclusive of Grades and Grading, and Academic Misconduct)

1. Students are occasionally confronted with classroom situations (exclusive of grades and grading) that cause them concern and/or inconvenience. Examples include:
 - a. Failure of an instructor or administrator to uphold University policies, such as prohibition of smoking in classrooms, prohibition of scheduling comprehensive examinations during the last week, or early completion of semesters.
 - b. Failure of an instructor to enforce the Code of Conduct (see Graduate Bulletin [Appendix I](#)) with respect to students in the classroom.
 - c. Failure of an instructor to fulfill instructional obligations such as unjustified cancellation of classes, frequent absenteeism or late arrival, excessive absences during designated office hours, or inappropriate substitution of teaching assistants.
2. A graduate student who believes that a problem exists has several avenues by which he/she can pursue resolution. The avenue chosen by a student will depend upon the type of problem encountered and the wishes of the student.
 - a. Most problems may be resolved by discussing the matter with the instructor directly involved, and/or with the student's adviser.
 - b. If the problem remains unresolved following a. above, or if the nature of the problem or any other reason prompts a graduate student to believe that this first avenue is inappropriate, the student may seek recourse first through the SIA Director. If this step does not resolve the matter, the student should seek further recourse through the office of the Dean of SIA. Action of the Dean's office, if deemed appropriate by both the student and the administrator, shall occur within 30 days of the complaint or by the end of the semester.
3. Students may use this channel of communication with assurance that confidentiality will be maintained as appropriate: only information required to pursue a course of action as requested, or consented to, by the student in writing will be disclosed.

IV. Code of Conduct

1. The [Office of Student Conduct](#) supports the University's educational mission by promoting a safe, orderly and positive University climate through enforcing behavioral standards, enacting and facilitating intervention efforts, managing conduct proceedings, mentoring students, developing leadership, delivering informational programming and fostering peer education. We hope to create a University culture that is self-disciplined, where civility is embraced, and the norms and foundational beliefs validate the essential values of Penn State University, namely
 - a. Personal and academic integrity;
 - b. Respect for the dignity of all persons and a willingness to learn from the differences in people, ideas, and opinions;
 - c. Respect for the rights, property, and safety of others; and
 - d. Concern for others and their feelings and their need for conditions that support an environment where they can work, grow and succeed at Penn State.

2. Anyone may file a report alleging that a student or student organization violated the [Code of Conduct](#). Any report should be submitted as soon as possible after the event takes place. After a report is filed, additional investigation may be conducted.
3. The policies and procedures of the Office of Student Conduct govern the disposition of all allegations filed pursuant to the Code of Conduct.

V. Research Misconduct

1. Research misconduct is defined in the [Research Protections Policies \(RP02\)](#).
2. Anyone having reason to believe that a member of the faculty, staff or student body has engaged in research misconduct has a responsibility to report pertinent facts in accordance with this policy. The person may discuss the situation with a Budget Administrator or Budget Executive or the [Research Integrity Officer](#) or may report the facts through other established reporting procedures, such as the University's ethics hotline. A Budget Administrator or Budget Executive who receives information about possible research misconduct shall inform the Research Integrity Officer. If the circumstances described do not meet the definition of research misconduct, the Research Integrity Officer may refer the individual or allegation to other offices or officials with responsibility for resolving the problem.
3. The policies and procedures of the Research Integrity Office will govern all cases of misconduct allegations made under this policy.

VI. Other Situations

1. Disagreements to be considered under the following guidelines involve alleged violations of academic freedom, professional ethics, procedural fairness and consistency, and other issues of conduct not covered in previous sections. These guidelines do not apply to classroom matters, academic or research integrity, or behaviors addressed in the Code of Conduct.
2. Every effort should be made to resolve disagreements through consultation with relevant faculty, the Director of Academic Advising (or other relevant staff), and the Director of SIA.
3. If resolution cannot be achieved through these means, the Director of SIA, in consultation with the Graduate School, will determine whether a grievance proceeding is warranted and the grievance process described below should be initiated.
4. A grievance process that has been approved by the SIA Director will be then be forwarded to the Dean of the School of International Affairs, who will initiate the grievance process. Disagreements should be reported in a timely manner and this will be taken into account in light of the totality of circumstances as to whether the grievance process moves forward.
5. In response to the grievance, the SIA Dean shall consult with the Graduate School for the purpose of determining whether the subject matter of the grievance is covered by these guidelines, and if appropriate, the SIA Dean shall appoint and convene a Hearing Committee consisting of seven (7) members, within three (3) weeks of receipt of the grievance. From that time until the hearing ends, the SIA Dean shall refrain from involvement in the dispute. The Hearing Committee consists of three graduate students, three faculty members, and an administrator who will serve as chairperson. All members of the Hearing Committee will be from outside the academic department or unit, and from outside any graduate programs in which either the graduate student(s) or faculty member(s) involved in the grievance participate, whenever possible. In the case of multiple colleges being involved, the Hearing Committee shall include faculty and graduate students from each college involved. The chair of the committee should be an administrator from the college of the individual(s) against whom the grievance is directed.
6. The Hearing Committee should make every effort to conduct its proceedings in a timely manner.

7. Each party is allowed up to one disqualification from this committee without cause. An indefinite number of disqualifications are allowed with cause, as determined by the SIA Dean. The SIA Dean shall make additional appointments as necessary to fully staff the Hearing Committee.
8. The hearing is not public. During the hearing, either party may have present an adviser, who must be a student, faculty, or staff member of the University. In light of the nature and spirit of the proceeding, representation by legal counsel is prohibited.
9. The hearing committee may have present at the hearing such assistance as it deems necessary.
10. The hearing committee is not bound by strict rules of evidence and may admit any relevant evidence.
11. A record of the hearing shall be made by some means such as stenographic transcript, audio recording or the equivalent, and the record made available to the parties involved if requested.
12. The parties are afforded an opportunity to obtain necessary witnesses and documentary or other evidence. The department, program, or intercollege program involved makes all reasonable efforts to cooperate with the committee in securing witnesses and making available documentary and other evidence.
13. Each party has the right to respond to evidence presented by all witnesses. Expenses incurred in obtaining a witness will be the responsibility of the party requesting the witness.
14. The Hearing Committee's findings are based solely on the hearing record. In cases where issues involve authorship credit, the hearing committee should adhere to the spirit of [IP-02](#) (Co-Authorship of Scholarly Reports, Papers and Publications).
15. If it is determined during the course of the proceedings that a student may have violated the Code of Conduct, (Graduate Bulletin Appendix I), the misconduct shall be referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs (or the appropriate college academic integrity committee for issues related to academic misconduct), and shall not be subject to adjudication by the Hearing Committee; provided however, that any other issues covered by these guidelines, including but not limited to alleged breach of professional ethics by graduate students or faculty, shall be subject to adjudication by the Hearing Committee.

If serious misconduct is identified and evidence is provided to the Academic Integrity Committee after a student is awarded the graduate degree, sanctions up to and including the revocation of a degree can be imposed with recommendation by the Dean of the Graduate School to the President of the University, with whom final approval rests as the designee of the Board of Trustees.
16. Following the conclusion of the hearing, the Hearing Committee shall convene deliberations and shall issue a decision within thirty (30) calendar days of the conclusion of the hearings. (Under extraordinary circumstances, either party may request a stay to the 30-day time limit. A request for such a stay must include a justification and indicate the desired duration of the stay, and be directed to the Dean of the Graduate School, whose decision on the stay will be final.) The decision of the Hearing Committee will specify any sanction(s) or remedy(ies) that is (are) deemed appropriate, including but not limited to termination of the student's academic program and termination of the student's representation of the college in any capacity within the college, department or University. The decision of the Hearing Committee shall be provided to the SIA Dean for implementation. In the case of termination of a student's academic program for breach of professional ethics or other professional misconduct, the following notation shall be made on the student's transcript: "Program terminated for Professional Misconduct." Written notice of the decision of the Hearing Committee shall be provided to all parties. The Hearing Committee's written decision, along with any supporting documents, shall be submitted to and kept by the Graduate School for not less than seven years from the date of the decision. In cases where a finding of professional misconduct against a graduate student is determined, the College should maintain a record of the case and forward a copy of the written decision of the Hearing Committee along with any supporting documents to the Graduate School for its records as well.
17. Any party subject to any sanction or adverse finding may appeal the decision of the Hearing Committee to the SIA Dean. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the SIA Dean within three weeks of receipt of the decision of the Hearing Committee. The SIA Dean shall not convene an

additional hearing, but shall consider the record of the hearing, as well as the decision of the Hearing Committee. The SIA Dean may endorse all, part, or none of the Hearing Committee's decision, sanction or remedy. The SIA Dean shall come to a decision and issue a written notice within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the written appeal. (Under extraordinary circumstances, either party may request a stay to the 30-day time limit. A request for such a stay must include a justification and indicate the desired duration of the stay, and be directed to the Dean of the Graduate School, whose decision on the stay will be final.) If the SIA Dean does not endorse all of the findings and decision of the Hearing Committee, an explanation shall be included within the SIA Dean's written decision. The decision of the SIA Dean shall be final, except for circumstances where additional avenues of appeal are provided for by other University policies or procedures (e.g., Faculty Rights and Responsibilities). The SIA Dean's written decision, along with supporting documents, shall be submitted to and kept by the Graduate School for not less than seven years from the date of the resolution of the complaint.