

Policy Statement on Academic Misconduct

School of Computing
University of Utah

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1 Background

This document describes the policies and procedures used by the School of Computing (SoC) relating to academic misconduct of any student enrolled in a SoC course (e.g. CS 4710) or any course that is cross-listed with a SoC course (e.g. ECE 4710). This policy is in effect starting Jan. 9, 2012.

University of Utah policy as defined in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities¹ and College of Engineering policy as defined in the Academic Appeals and Misconduct Policy² also apply.

Computer Science is a professional discipline and almost all of our graduates pursue a career path where the computer science skills that they develop at the University form the very foundation of their skill set. While grades are the normal academic metric, good grades are not the end goal. The long-term key to success is mastery of some aspect of the discipline. Mastery and cheating are diametric opposites. In the workplace, copying without proper attribution has dire consequence. The result is significant financial liability for the company, as well as grounds for termination. In addition, the lack of mastery leads to poor craftsmanship. Consider the life threatening consequences of poor craftsmanship in safety critical systems that are pervasive in medicine, transportation, manufacturing, etc. Large corporations develop and continually refine their codes of professional ethics and employees are typically required to take a refresher course on an annual basis. It is our job to prepare our students to succeed and hopefully to become leaders in their chosen profession. This requires developing both technical and ethical skills. The rules are simple: work hard, master the topic, and don't cheat. If you cheat the consequences will be severe, just as they will be in the workplace.

2 SoC Academic Misconduct Policy

Any course listed as CS xxxx or any equivalent course that is cross-listed with a CS xxxx course will subsequently be referred to simply as a CS course.

Any student who receives two failing grade sanctions in CS courses due to academic misconduct will be subsequently barred from registering for any additional CS courses. Any student pursuing any SoC degree who receives two such sanctions will be immediately dropped from their respective degree program and will not be admitted to any future SoC program. Note that a failing grade sanction still applies even for students who withdraw from the course after the sanction is imposed.

Any failing sanction due to academic misconduct can be appealed. If the appeal is successful then the failing sanction will be lifted. Hence this policy applies only to failing grade sanctions

¹<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/guides/students/studentRights.html>

²<http://www.coe.utah.edu/current-undergrad/appeal.php>

which are not successfully appealed.

3 Definition of academic misconduct

As defined in the University Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information. It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another student to commit an act of academic misconduct.¹ A primary example of academic misconduct would be submitting as one's own, work that is copied from an outside source.

Detailed information on what constitutes academic misconduct for a specific class is defined by the CS course instructor and will be found in the course syllabus. If a student has questions about the syllabus, they should seek clarification from the instructor. An individual's academic misconduct is tracked by the SoC for all CS courses. Information about prior offenses is available to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Director of Graduate Studies, the SoC Director, and SoC office staff. CS course instructors will not have access to this information to avoid unfair scrutiny of previous academic misconduct offenders.

4 Training and acknowledgment of policy

All students will be notified of the SoC academic misconduct policy both in the course syllabus and by the instructor during the two weeks in any CS course. Each student in a CS course must either have this form on file in the SoC office or must print, sign, and submit the form acknowledging that they understand the SoC academic misconduct policy to the appropriate graduate or undergraduate academic advisor in the SoC office. A link to this form will be available on the course web page and on the SoC web page. This form must be submitted prior to the end of the second week of any semester in which a student is enrolled in a CS course. Students who fail to submit the form by this date will be asked to withdraw from the course. Students who do not withdraw from the course and fail to turn in the form will receive a EU grade. Once submitted, the form will stay on file and acknowledge that the student knows that the SoC policy spans all CS courses.

Operationally this policy varies depending on whether the student is a SoC undergraduate major or graduate student versus other students who are taking CS courses.

Students who are admitted as SoC graduate students or undergraduate majors will need to sign and return this form to the appropriate academic advisor prior to the end of the second week of their first term in the CS undergraduate major or SoC graduate degree program. They will not need to subsequently turn in additional forms for subsequent CS courses.

Students who are not pursuing degrees offered by the SoC will need to submit a separate form for every course taught by a SoC instructor.

5 Sanctions and appeals at the course level

If an instance of academic misconduct is discovered, two options apply.

Fail-the-course option

The default sanction for an offense of academic misconduct is a failing grade for the course.

Less-than-fail option

As defined in the course syllabus, or due to instructor discretion, an academic misconduct sanction may be relaxed from a failing grade. Records of a relaxed sanction will also be kept in the student's permanent file but will not count towards dismissal from the degree program or CS course enrollment restrictions.

For either type of academic misconduct sanction, the procedure is illustrated in Figure 1. For more information on the appeal process, see the University of Utah Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities³.

Should a student need advice or guidance about his/her appeal, the SoC Director of Undergraduate or Graduate Studies can serve as an informal advisor, and the student is encouraged to seek such help.

6 Instructor Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of all instructors teaching CS courses to clearly articulate what constitutes academic misconduct in the syllabus for their course. The syllabus must also provide a link to this policy and to the academic misconduct acknowledgment form.
2. The instructor must make the syllabus available on the course web page.
3. The instructor must discuss the SoC's academic misconduct policy and the definition of academic misconduct for a particular course in the first two weeks of the course and provide the URL for the course web page. The instructor must clearly notify the students of the need to read this policy and to return the acknowledgment form to the appropriate academic advisor by the end of the second week of the term.

7 Student Responsibilities

1. Students are required to understand this policy and to not engage in any activity that could constitute academic misconduct as defined in this policy.
2. CS or CE majors and SoC graduate students must file the acknowledgment form prior to the end of the second week of their first semester in their respective degree programs.
3. Other students must fill out the acknowledgment form in the first two weeks of any CS course by the end of the second week of class.

³<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html#section.4> Section IV.B

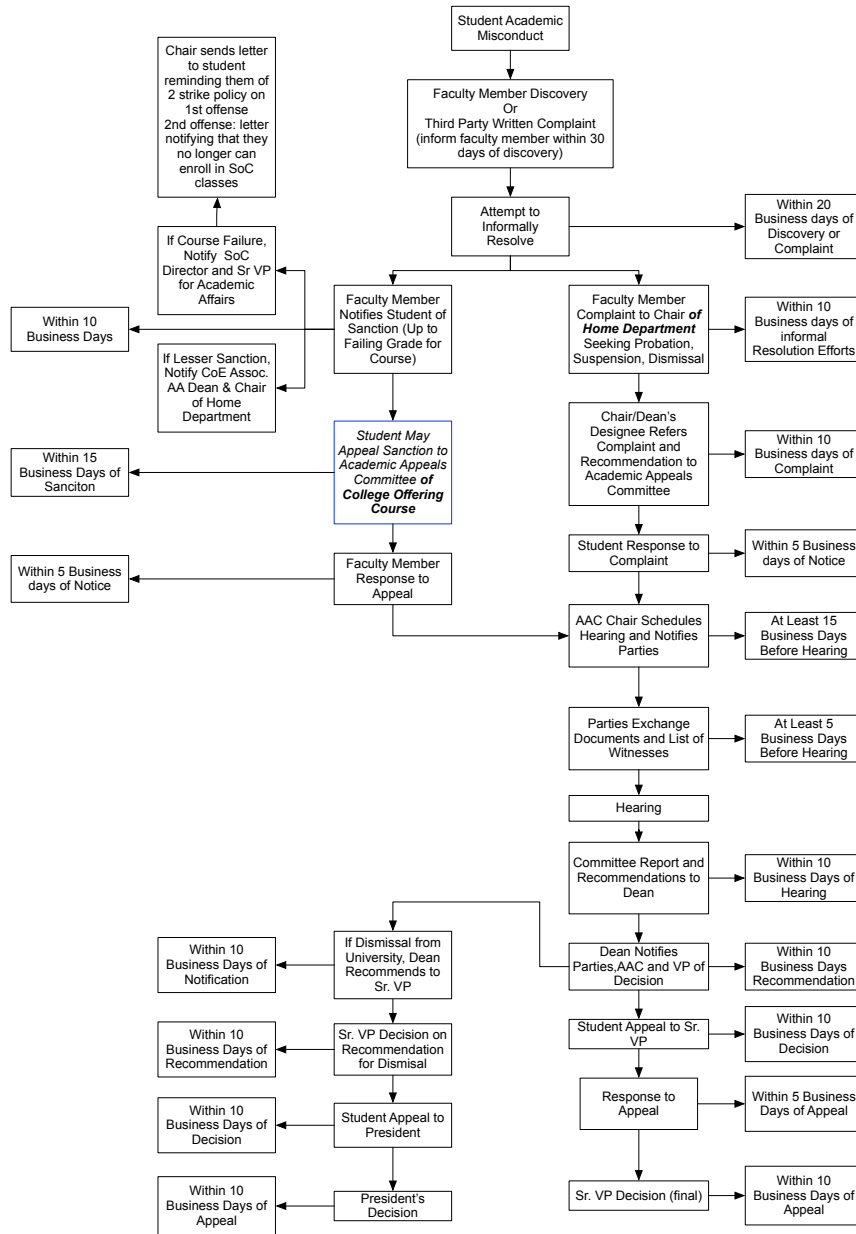


Figure 1: Academic Misconduct Process Illustrated