

Killam Centre for Advanced Studies
2-29 Triffo Hall, University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2E1
Tel: 780.492.3499
Fax: 780.492.0692
grad.mail@ualberta.ca
uofa.ualberta.ca/graduate-studies

FGSR Note on Discipline Process: Report from the Associate Deans

The FGSR Associate Deans handle both academic matters (such as cases of poor academic performance justifying termination of a student's academic program) and discipline matters (being matters that fall under the University's Code of Student Behaviour). It is not an academic disciplinary matter to fail a course or have a low GPA. Academic disciplinary matters are matters of alleged plagiarism, cheating and research misconduct. To ensure fairness, and with a view to avoiding complaints being dismissed for process reasons, please note:

1. **Reporting a possible breach of the Code of Student Behaviour**: The Code of Student Behaviour requires a Dean to investigate a complaint of "inappropriate academic behaviour" (the term used at this university to cover plagiarism, cheating, misuse of confidential materials, and scholarship and research misconduct). Instructors (defined by the Code to include thesis supervisors and examiners) who suspect a case of inappropriate academic behaviour must follow the procedure set out in section 30.5.4 of the Code (with a copy of the Code available online from University Governance). We do not operate by surprise. The Code requires the instructor to meet with the student before deciding whether a report to the Dean is warranted. But note that it is the Dean (or delegate) who investigates the matter and makes a decision as to whether an offence has occurred. Please do not turn a meeting to decide whether a report is warranted into a full-blown investigation as that would be a breach of the Code's procedures. Leave the investigation to the Dean (or Dean's delegate). Be clear as to the purpose of the meeting. Meet with the student, come to a view as to whether a report is warranted, and if yes, report the violation to the appropriate Dean (see below) with a written statement of the details of the case.
2. **Can an instructor suggest a sanction?**: Yes. In addition to reporting the details of the alleged breach of the Code, the instructor may (if desired) make a recommendation as to sanction. But note that the sanction recommendation must relate to a sanction authorized by the Code of Student Behaviour. We cannot invent sanctions. The sanction has to relate to the alleged conduct by the student.
3. **Which Dean handles a possible breach of the Code of Student Behaviour?**: If an alleged breach of the Code of Student Behaviour occurs in a course, the matter is handled by the Dean of the Faculty that offers the course. Interdisciplinary work means that graduate students can be taking courses in a variety of Faculties. Courses include those designated as the capping exercise for course-based master's programs. For all other situations, including alleged breaches of the Code in a thesis, the matter is handled by the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is enrolled, which for graduate students is the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. This advice flows from the definition of "Dean" found in section 30.2.12 of the Code.
4. **Confidentiality**: Code of Student Behaviour investigations are confidential proceedings. Please encourage your colleagues not to involve multiple persons in these proceedings. It is not a departmental investigation.

We remain happy to answer any questions either at Council or on a one-to-one basis.

Dr. Deborah Burshtyn
Deborah.burshtyn@ualberta.ca

Dr. Suzanne Kresta
Suzanne.kresta@ualberta.ca

Dr. Bryan Hogeveen
Bryan.hogeveen@ualberta.ca

Dr. Paul Melançon
Pmelancon.fgsr@ualberta.ca

Excerpt from the Code of Student Behaviour

30.5.4 **Procedures for Instructors in Cases Respecting Inappropriate Academic Behaviour**

- 30.5.4(1) When an **instructor** believes that a Student may have committed an Inappropriate Academic Behaviour Offence [30.3.2] or that there has been Misrepresentation of Facts [30.3.6(4)] or Participation in an Offence [30.3.6(5)] in cases respecting Inappropriate Academic Behaviour in the course that he or she instructs, **the instructor will meet with the Student**. Before such a meeting, the Instructor shall inform the Student of the purpose of the meeting. In the event that the Student refuses or fails to meet with the Instructor within a reasonable period of time specified by the Instructor, **the instructor shall, taking into account the available information, decide whether a report to the Dean is warranted**.
- 30.5.4(2) If the Instructor believes there has been a violation of the Code, **the instructor shall**, as soon as possible after the event occurred, **report** that violation to the Dean and **provide a written statement of the details of the case**. The instructor **may also** include a recommendation for sanction.
- 30.5.4(3) **The Dean**, acting in accordance with 30.5.7, **shall decide** whether the Student has committed an offence and, if so, whether the sanction recommended by the Instructor or any other sanction is appropriate.

Note that both “Instructor” and “Dean” are defined terms in this University’s Code of Student Behaviour. The definition of “Instructor” is found in section 30.2.21 and the definition of “Dean” is found in section 30.2.12. For further information on the sanctions available under the Code, see section 30.4. Deans have the authority to set Minor or Intermediate Sanctions (being defined terms in the Code). Deans may also recommend that the Discipline Officer impose Severe Sanctions (such as expulsion, suspension, and rescission of a degree).

Note too that the Code of Student Behaviour does change from time to time, including the numbering of its provisions. Always check the online version to make sure that you are using the current version. University Governance is the keeper of the Code. See: <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/>

There are other means for a report of an alleged violation of the Code of Student Behaviour to come to a Dean, including a procedure for any member of the university community to report a violation of the Code. This note focusses on the most common route relevant to this audience.