

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

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Academic Standards

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As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, co-authored pieces, and project reports.
- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's procedures. Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

In addition, Mason has an office that addresses issues related to research misconduct. Those incidents are investigated through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance. As it states in University Policy 4007, "Allegations of academic misconduct against graduate students are governed solely by the university's Honor Code, except for 1) research activities as defined above regardless of sponsorship; and 2) master's theses and doctoral dissertations, both of which are governed by this policy. Allegations of academic misconduct against students are governed solely by the university academic standards, except for sponsored research activities which are governed by this policy." For more information, contact the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance via their website at Office of Research integrity and Assurance (<https://>

ria.gmu.edu/topics/research-misconduct/). (<https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/research-misconduct/>)

Academic Standards Statement

Academic Standards works to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourages continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for ensuring the work they are submitting is their own created work. This includes checking to make sure that any information that was not their own creation is properly attributed to the original source, as well as working within the guidelines provided by the professor of the class regarding submitted work. Facilitating misconduct in the form of providing unauthorized resources, tests, or solutions for others is a violation of the university's academic standards and will be dealt with as such. Additionally, students should request an explanation of any aspect of the professor's policies that they do not fully understand.

Any student who is referred for violating academic standards is not allowed to drop or withdraw from the course in question until the case is resolved and the student has been found not in violation. If a student drops or withdraws from the course in question, they will be re-enrolled and will be charged tuition and fees for the course. If a student is found in violation, they will not be allowed to withdraw from or drop the course in question.

Faculty Responsibilities Reporting

All suspected violations in any semester must be reported to the Academic Standards office by the deadline for that semester's grades or within 2 months from initial discovery of alleged misconduct. Professors who require an extension on reporting due to material collection must contact the office directly for guidance.

It is the professor's responsibility to provide all the material necessary to support the referral. The Academic Standards Office does not investigate cases and does not gather materials to support referrals. If the office receives material that are not sufficient to understand or identify the nature of the alleged violation, the professor will be notified and given the opportunity to amend their submission with materials that provide a clearer view of the allegations. Faculty must submit the requested materials within five business days of the Academic Standard's Office request for additional information. If additional information is not provided to support the allegation, the referral may be dismissed without a hearing.

The Academic Standards Office reserves the right to dismiss referrals without a hearing when (1) the materials provided do not clearly outline the alleged violation, (2) there is insufficient material to support the allegation, or (3) the referral is not made in a timely manner.

Grade Updates

The professor is responsible for updating the student's grade after the case referred to the academic standards office is complete, including any relevant appeal period. The professor will be notified after the resolution of the case regarding the grade assigned according to the university sanctioning matrix. If a case is not resolved by the time grades are due, the professor shall insert a grade of HC into Banner. Upon resolution of the case, the professor will work with their department and the Registrar's Office to complete the necessary paperwork to update the student's grade.

Educational Requirements

While cases are being investigated, faculty are expected to continue to teach referred students and assign earned grades to any submitted assessments/assignments. Should the student be involved in another alleged violation, the faculty member should refer the student through the referral portal on the Academic Standards website.

Record Keeping and Reporting

An academic standards referral is part of a student's educational record and is subject to guidelines put forth by the Library of Virginia and laws and statutes put forth by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Educational records are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (F.E.R.P.A.). As such, only the student has the right to access them. A student may sign a waiver allowing access to a third party for a specified time. Without a waiver, the Academic Standards office does not share information with anyone who does not have an educational need to know.

The records of any student found to have not violated academic standards or whose case is dismissed will not be reportable.

Resolutions that result in altered grades and/or educational sanctions do not have transcript notation. However, a resolution that results in a suspension or permanent dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript with an academic standards designation. A transcript notation will be made if a student withdraws from the university while under investigation for academic dishonesty. Suspension notations are removed from the transcript upon the suspension period's completion.

On occasion, a student may apply for a graduate program, internship, or job that requires a background or records check. Information is not shared without a signed waiver from the student.

Record retention schedules adhere to all federal, state, and institutional regulations and cannot be amended or altered by the Academic Standards Office or George Mason University.