

SCS Guide to Reporting Alleged Violations of Academic Integrity

This document is intended to assist SCS Faculty Lecturers and Course Lecturers in understanding when and how to report an alleged violation of academic integrity (typically, a case of alleged plagiarism or cheating, as defined under the *McGill Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures* [[Articles 16-19](#)]), and what information needs to be provided to the Disciplinary Officer. Should you have any follow-up questions, please contact the SCS Disciplinary Officer, Dr. Sue Laver, at sue.laver@mcgill.ca.

1. What not to do

If an instructor suspects that a student may have committed an academic offence, ***it is imperative that they follow University regulations***. Please consult these two webpages:

- <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/staff>
- <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/staff/student>

Note that alleged academic offences **cannot be dealt with “at the local level”** by instructors, coordinators, or directors. Attempts to deal with academic offences at the local level violate students’ rights under the [Charter of Students’ Rights](#). In concrete terms, this means, for example, that instructors

- should not in any way *directly* accuse a student of having committed an academic offence—by, for example, writing the words “plagiarized” or “cheating” (or synonyms) on the suspect work or in an email, or by verbally raising the issue or making an accusation in a face-to face meeting (including a virtual meeting);
- deduct marks for alleged plagiarism or cheating;
- require students to re-submit the assignment or complete an alternative or additional assignment.

2. To whom should I send my report?

If an instructor wishes to follow-up on a suspicion that a student has committed an academic offence, they must contact the Disciplinary Officer (DO) of *the student’s home Faculty*. The home Faculty of most students who take SCS courses is SCS. In these cases, reports should be sent to **Dr. Sue Laver, the DO for SCS** (sue.laver@mcgill.ca). If the home Faculty of the student in question is not SCS, the report must be sent to the DO of that Faculty. A list of Faculty/School DOs is provided here: <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/disciplinary/officers>.

A report is typically sent to the DO via email. **Please use the following subject line: *CONFIDENTIAL Alleged Violation of Academic Integrity*. No-one other than the DO should be copied on this email, and the email should not be forwarded to any other party, including Program Coordinators and Directors/Associate Directors.**

3. What information should I include in my report?

Your report should include the following information:

- Student’s name and McGill ID number.
- Student’s McGill email address.
- Title of the course, subject code, section number, and the semester in which the course was offered.
- A copy of the course syllabus.
- Copies of any instructions or guidelines provided to students in relation to the suspect assignment.
- In the case of **plagiarism**, a copy of the student’s suspect work, highlighted/annotated in support of the claim that the student has committed plagiarism, plus links to sources that have been plagiarized.
- In the case of **cheating**, evidence supporting the claim that the student has cheated.

- An easy-to-read spreadsheet containing the grades that the student has received for all other assignments, along with the corresponding percentage weights for each assignment.

A spreadsheet downloaded straight from *myCourses* can be very difficult to comprehend if you are not the course instructor. For this reason, please follow the format below, and of course adjust the title of each assignment and the percentage weight as appropriate:

Student Name	McGill ID	Assignment	Group Case #1	Group Case #2	Midterm	Group Case #3	Group Case #4	Final Case	Participation	Final Grade
		Weight	5%	5%	35%	5%	5%	40%	5%	
		Graded out of:	100	100	35	100	100	100	5	

Enter a grade of zero for the suspect assignment into this spreadsheet, and then calculate and enter the final grade into the spreadsheet. *Note that this does not mean that the assignment will in fact be assigned a grade of zero—see point 7 below*

4. Should I assign a grade to the suspect assignment?

Even in cases of what appear to be flagrant violations of academic integrity, there are any number of reasons why a student might ultimately be exonerated. For this reason, you should assign a grade to the suspect assignment. This can be very challenging, but please do your best to assign a grade that is as “objective” as possible (this would include a failing grade assigned on other grounds). **Include this “objective” grade in the email report that you send to the DO, but *do not enter it into the grade book in myCourses*.**

5. What final course grade should I enter in Minerva or Athena (Destiny)?

When an instructor reports an allegation of a violation of academic integrity, the grade entered in Minerva or Athena (Destiny) must be “NA,” which stands for “not available.” If the Minerva or Athena (Destiny) system does not allow you to enter “NA,” please send an email to the DO who will arrange to have it manually entered by SCS Client Services. Minerva is the place to record grades for credit courses. Athena (Destiny) is the place to record grades for non-credit transcript courses, i.e., non-credit courses for which Continuing Education Units (CEUs) apply.

6. What should I communicate to a student suspected of having violated academic integrity?

Grades for individual assignments should always be recorded in the *myCourses* grade book. A student who sees a blank grade for a suspect assignment will inevitably ask the instructor for an explanation. Please use the following statement by way of explanation (language provided by the Office of the Dean of Students):

“A concern has been raised about your [insert NAME OF ASSIGNMENT], and it has been passed along to the Disciplinary Officer for the School of Continuing Studies [if SCS is not the student’s home Faculty, please insert the name of the relevant Faculty]. The disciplinary office has likely started an investigation, and if there is a situation that might suggest that an academic offence has been committed, you may receive a letter about this. I want you to know that this process is fair, and you will have a chance to explain yourself in case you are called to a disciplinary interview. The Dean of Students Office can address questions you might have, and you can also refer to their [website](#) which explains the process.”

Students will often send follow-up emails to the instructor, the coordinator, or the director. Although you might wish to respond to those emails, it is best that you don’t. Instead, forward them to the DO. If a student is persistent, you can send them the email address of the DO.

7. What happens after I have reported a student for an alleged violation of academic integrity?

From the moment that an official report is sent to the DO, ***strict confidentiality rules apply***. As above, the instructor should not communicate about the matter with the student or with any other party.

- The DO will review the supporting information/material provided and will then send an email to the student requesting that they attend an interview. The student is entitled to have an advisor present at the interview (a member of the McGill community who cannot be paid for this advisory role). The DO is likewise entitled to have an advisor present should they deem it necessary.
- Once the interview has been scheduled, the DO provides the student with the supporting documents or other evidence in advance of the interview.
- During the interview, the DO provides a summary of the allegation and supporting evidence, and the student has the opportunity to respond, including providing their own, potentially exonerating, evidence.

8. What are the possible outcomes?

Under the *McGill Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures*, there are three possible outcomes:

- **Exoneration:** When a student is exonerated, it means that the allegation was not upheld and therefore no penalty is imposed on the student.
- **Admonishment:** An admonishment signifies that a student has violated an article of the *Code* and that this finding was supported by *clear, convincing, and reliable evidence*. Admonishment is a sanction internal to the University. It is an official warning to the student but does not constitute a disciplinary record maintained by the Dean of Students.
- **Reprimand:** A reprimand signifies that a student has violated an Article of the *Code* and that this finding was supported by *clear, convincing, and reliable evidence*. A reprimand follows from an official finding of responsibility and is a formal sanction. Unlike an admonishment, a reprimand appears on the student's disciplinary record maintained by the Dean of Students. It is therefore a more serious outcome than an admonishment.

In the case of admonishment or reprimand, other penalties may be imposed, such as a failing grade for the assignment or the course, or conduct probation. In any event, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Committee of Student Discipline at a later date. *Note that the DO is not permitted to notify the instructor of the outcome.*

9. What can instructors do to educate students about academic integrity?

Newly admitted students must complete the [Academic Integrity Tutorial](#). Failure to do so will prevent students from being able to register for courses for the following semester. Remind students of this University requirement.

All McGill course syllabi are required to include the following statement:

English Version: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the McGill Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

French Version: L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

This statement should be added to **ALL assignments** to maximize visibility and student comprehension.

SCS also recommends the following :

- Make time during the first class to discuss the importance of academic integrity and the serious consequences that students may face if they violate academic integrity.
- Repeat this information following the end of the add/drop period.
- Provide examples of work that violate academic integrity. This is particularly important if you have students in your class who come from cultures/countries with different rhetorical and citation traditions.
- Encourage students from different cultures/countries to meet with you should they require further guidance.
- Include a link to the Library's [citation guides](#) in your *myCourses* site.
- **Include an Academic Integrity folder** in your *myCourses* site where these various resources can be housed for students' ready reference. This folder should also include a link to [Articles 16-19 of the McGill Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#).
- Provide instructions/guidelines that are as specific as possible about what resources students can and cannot use during completion of an assignment/exam. This is particularly important for "open book" and "take home" assignments/exams, and even more so during the remote period when invigilated exams are not possible.
- Ask the Program Coordinator or Director to arrange for an instructor Q&A session with the DO.