

What to Do in a Case of Plagiarism in a First-Year Composition Class: A Step-by-Step Guide for Instructors

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1. You suspect academic dishonesty. Please contact the Director, Associate Director, or the Assistant Director of Composition to schedule a meeting to review the suspected case of plagiarism and discuss a plan of action.
2. You may choose to meet with student(s) involved to investigate and determine if an instance of academic dishonesty did occur. (You may also choose not to meet with the student(s) or the student(s) may not be available due to semester breaks. In either of these cases, proceed to step 3).
3. To preserve the student's right to appeal, you **must** send a letter to The Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards **anytime** you impose a penalty for plagiarism. Draft a letter to the student using the "Sample Plagiarism Letter" template (available on the English Department Blackboard site and the "Resources for Composition Teachers" web page--<http://english.utk.edu/resources-for-composition-teachers/>).

This letter notifies the student in writing of the allegation of plagiarism and details the instance of plagiarism, the specific professorial penalty to be imposed, and the student's route of appeal. **We ask instructors to use the "Sample Plagiarism Letter" template as a framework from which to draft their own letter to insure that all necessary information is included.** Change only those parts of the letter that refer to the specifics of your case. You will need the student's UTK identification number and UTK email address. The letter must be printed on departmental letterhead, which is included in the "Sample Plagiarism Letter."

4. Submit the letter with your signature, a copy of the student paper, and a copy of all accompanying documentation to support the plagiarism charge, to the Composition Office for final review. Once the letter is reviewed, the Director of Composition will give it to the department head for a signature.
5. The Composition Office will email you a digital (pdf) copy of the letter **for you to email to the student right away. No hard copy needs to be sent to the student—only an emailed copy.** Once you email the digital copy of the letter to the student, your responsibility in filing the plagiarism case is finished; however, please keep all documentation in case the student appeals the charge.
6. The Composition Office will provide a copy of the letter to the following campus offices: the Office of the Dean of Students, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the dean of academic unit in which the student is enrolled. The Composition Office will keep a copy of the letter and supporting documentation on file as well.

7. Upon receipt of the emailed letter from you, the student may choose to appeal the professorial penalty according to the process outlined in *Hilltopics* under the heading “Appeal of Professorial Penalty” (available online at: <http://hilltopics.utk.edu>). The student’s appeal may be resolved at the department level in consultation with the instructor and/or department head. If not resolved at the department level, the student may request that his/her appeal be heard in an Academic Review Board Hearing. If the appeal is heard by an Academic Review Board, the determinations of the board will be made according to the procedures outlined in *Hilltopics* under the heading, “Decision and Right of Appeal.” Additional appeal options may be pursued by the student after this point if the student so chooses. (See *Hilltopics*, Appeal of Academic Review Board Decision.)

FYI only: Steps followed by The Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards:

1. Upon receipt of an allegation of academic dishonesty from an instructor, the accused student is contacted and one of two tracks is followed:

a. If the instructor does not recommend any additional action be taken against the student (i.e., only a professorial penalty is being imposed), no judicial record is created for the student. A file of the incident is maintained however in the event that future incidents occur involving the same student. The student is given the opportunity to meet with a member of the Judicial Affairs staff if he/she has questions about the appeal process.

b. If the instructor recommends that Judicial Affairs should take additional action and impose a behavioral sanction in addition to the professorial penalty, the student is instructed to meet with a member of our staff to respond to the charge of academic dishonesty. In this instance, a judicial record is created for the student.

2. If the student chooses to appeal the professorial penalty and/or the behavioral sanction to an Academic Review Board, a Judicial Advisor from the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards will inform the instructor of the appeal. The Judicial Advisor will likely request to meet with the instructor and may request documentation or other information to assist in preparing for the hearing. Instructors should save documents, correspondence, and notes related to the allegation.

3. The Academic Review Board Hearing will occur as soon as is practically possible and will, in almost all cases, require the participation of the instructor along with additional witnesses or individuals who may have knowledge of the situation.

4. If the student chooses not to appeal the professorial penalty and/or the behavioral sanction, the case will be closed. When a professorial penalty is assigned and/or accepted by a student, all other university academic policies continue to apply regarding re-taking of the course, etc.