

# What to Do in Case of Plagiarism in FYC

## A Step-by-Step Guide for Instructors

*Updated January 2021*

### **Overview**

This document outlines the process for dealing with plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty when teaching a first-year composition course. Note that the process has changed as of January 2021, and that the process now culminates with instructors submitting a form that goes to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (SCCS). Further information about academic honesty is available at the link below:

<https://studentconduct.utk.edu/academic-dishonesty/>

### **Step 1: Determine the case**

The first step is to determine how clear-cut the case is. If you suspect academic dishonesty but are unsure, you should contact someone from the Composition Office to discuss the matter before proceeding. If there is no question that the case constitutes academic dishonesty, you can proceed to Step 2.

### **Step 2: Notify the student(s)**

Notify the student(s) involved to inform them of your concerns and to give them an informal opportunity to respond to the allegations. If the student does not respond to the notice within five days, you may impose an academic penalty. You may also impose an academic penalty (e.g., grade reduction) after the consultation if the allegation of academic misconduct remains. Proceed to Step 3.

### **Step 3: Draft the letter**

Draft a letter to the student(s) using the Sample Plagiarism Letter template, which is available on the FYC Canvas site.

The purpose of the letter is to notify the student(s) 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. This template is designed to ensure that you communicate all of the necessary information to the student(s) and to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.

The letter will need to include the student's student ID number and UT email address. It also must be written on department letterhead, which is provided as part of template. Change only those parts of the letter that refer to the specifics of your case. Proceed to Step 4.

### **Step 4: Email the letter to the Director of Composition**

Email the signed letter to the Director of Composition for review. Be sure to include a digital copy of the student paper and all accompanying documentation to support the plagiarism charge.

Once the letter is reviewed, the Composition Office will send it to the department head for a signature. The Composition Office will then email you a digital copy of the signed letter. The Composition Office will also keep a copy of the letter and supporting documentation on file and supply them to the relevant deans. Proceed to Step 5.

### **Step 5: Email the signed letter to the student(s)**

Email the signed letter to the student(s) as soon as you receive it from the Composition Office. Note that you do not need to send a print copy of the letter—a digital copy will do. Move on to Step 6.

### **Step 6: File an online report with SCCS**

File a report with the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards as soon after completing Step 5 as possible. You can access the online form at the link below:

[https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofTennessee&layout\\_id=1](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofTennessee&layout_id=1)

The form requires standard information and asks you to upload various documents. Upload the letter assembled for you by the Composition Office as one of the documents. You can also refer to letter and copy and paste sections from it to complete the online form. The form also asks you to upload a syllabus. The Office of Student Conduct will keep this information and set up a meeting with the student.

Within five days of receipt of the emailed letter from you and in consultation with SCCS, the student may choose to appeal the professorial penalty according the process outlined in Hilltopics. More information about the appeals process is available in UT's Student Code of Conduct, which is available via the link below:

<https://studentconduct.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/2018/07/Fall-2020-StudentCodeOfConductBook-FINAL.pdf>

You can also find a flowchart of the appeals process here:

<https://studentconduct.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/2018/07/Student-Conduct-Process-Sheet-Fall-2020-2.pdf>