

**Revisions to Senate Policy on Academic Honesty:
Consultations on proposed new Academic Conduct Policy and Procedures
March 22, 2021**

The following represents a summary of the Faculty of Health Standing Committee on Examinations and Standards (CEAS) consultation and recommendations on the revised Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. CEAS acknowledges, with appreciation, the consultation shared by Office of Student and Academic Services (OSAS), which informed sections of this summary.

1. As addressed in the briefing note, the high-level goals of the revisions to the Policy include:
 - a. adapting to new realities in the academic conduct landscape
 - b. streamlining investigation procedures to encourage formal resolution while maintaining alignment with principles of procedural fairness and natural justice
 - c. providing enhanced flexibility on sanctions
 - d. enhancing University-wide consistency in terms of procedures and documentation and record-keeping protocols
 - e. clarifying language and minimizing legalistic terminology

Drawing on your experience, do the proposed new Policy and Procedures achieve these goals?

CEAS Report

1. High-level goals for revision to Policy:
 - a. The new policy has adapted to include the new realities of academic conduct through:
 - inclusion of high-volume misconduct procedures,
 - enhanced use of Zoom under current remote needs and going forward to increase convenience,
 - greater recognition of how technological advances have increased the methods available for committing breaches.
 - **Question:** Should use/sale/purchase of test banks be included as an additional method of cheating (under 4.3)?
 - b. Streamlining investigation proceedings: Advancement in streamlining procedures (although many inconsistent with current CEAS practices).
 - The option to involve Course Directors (CDs) in resolution may offer a more timely response for students, an important consideration, given significant delays that can occur at both the unit and Faculty level to process cases. However, much would depend on the administrative processes at the unit level that are put in place to support CDs. The proposed timelines for CDs to contact students (within two days), seem unrealistic, given their other responsibilities and commitments. Similarly, if the CD opts to have the UPD manage the case, the two day contact also seems unrealistic, given the potential for increased numbers of cases that could be processed at the unit level with this new policy. Contacting the student within one week would seem more reasonable.
 - Permitting students to opt for a written submission to the charge at the unit level within ten days rather than being required to attend an exploratory meeting could expedite the process significantly.
 - There is concern regarding lack of an assigned role to provide oversight of all breach cases to ensure consistent standards in nature and extent of penalties assigned across Units, CDs, and cases. Currently this role is filled by the Chair of CEAS who vets all files from the Unit level and

approves advancement of prior-offense and contested cases to the Faculty level for a panel hearing. It would appear that the Faculty level PPR (Associate Dean [AD]) could take on this role.

- Under 8.2 (c). We recommend that consistent with 8.2(b) that 8.2(c) should read: “when the CD refers an investigation to the PPR **or PPR designate**.”

- **c. providing enhanced flexibility on sanctions**

- Improvement in expanded options available.
- Enhanced flexibility of lower-level sanctions is an improvement over current provisions which center largely around penalty of lowering the grade in the vast majority of cases.

- **d. enhancing University-wide consistency in terms of procedures and documentation and record-keeping protocols**

- There are a number of inconsistencies with current Faculty of Health procedures, particularly with respect to distribution of administrative responsibilities and lack of oversight regarding decisions made. It would appear that the Faculty could determine who would maintain that central repository. Our Office of Student and Academic Services (OSAS) is currently doing so.
- Unaware of procedures in other Faculties.

- **e. clarifying language and minimizing legalistic terminology**

- Language is clear and terminology more well-stipulated with useful definitions
- Under 8.4 (d) recommend clarifying/expanding discussion of penalties available to CD; whether the only penalties available to the CD involve lowering of grade for an assignment or whether they include all lesser sanctions that occur before this.
- Under 8.4 (f) should the CD report the outcome of the investigation to the PPR or PPR designate? If we agree that since the CD can only lay a penalty within clear parameters, why would they not report their decision to the UPD and thus the undergrad administrative staff, who would communicate the decision to the student in writing? In this case, the student would still have the option to appeal the decision to the Faculty Appeals Committee which is the current CEAS Subcommittee on AH Hearings.
- Under 8.4 (g) the CD would advise the department (UPD/admin) who would communicate the outcome to the student as it is currently done.
- Under 8.5 (d), consistent with 8.5(c), should the PPR designate be involved? The PPR designate may determine the appropriate action having regard to the circumstances of the case and in (e) decide on appropriate sanction.

2. Do the proposed sanctions provide sufficient options and flexibility at both the undergraduate and graduate levels?

- Yes, expansion of sanctions captures the spirit of some that have come to be used on an ad hoc basis within the Faculty, including taking of Academic Integrity Quiz and written Academic Honesty assignment.

3. Are there other relevant items that should be included in the University-level policy?

- How should concurrent cases be processed?
- Important that prior offenses be handled in such a way that decision makers (CD, UPD) not be made aware of these and rather that the cases be processed normally at the Unit level and are separated out for further evaluation at the Faculty level
- More clarity is needed on how files are handled if student fails to agree to breach and/or penalty.

- Currently students are able to recommend a penalty when a case goes to panel. Clarity is needed on whether we can still accommodate this.
- Role of oversight for consistency in procedures and sanctions is currently under purview of CEAS Chair. This is less clearly addressed in the new Policy. Perhaps if the AD is cc'd on all decision letters sent to the student from the unit, the AD would be made aware of potential penalty decisions that are out of the ordinary---in a timely way.
- When a student elects not to attend an exploratory meeting, the current policy indicates that the file will proceed to panel. There must be an option to consult with the student and offer them the penalty that was proposed at the exploratory meeting in their absence. If they agree with the penalty, they can sign the necessary documentation which waives the right to a panel hearing and the file will be closed.
- **One suggestion that has been put forward addresses** files where the assignment is less than 10% with a recommendation that even if it is a second offence, the file would be better handled at the unit level only. **CEAS** does not concur with this suggestion, preferring to handle all breaches similarly, regardless of the proportion of the grade that is affected.

4. Taking into consideration your Faculty's existing petition and appeals structures and resources, are the new Policy and Procedures aligned with them or would modifications be required to implement the Policy and Procedures?

- Significant modifications required.
- The Faculty of Health would have the option to designate the AD (PPR) as Faculty Presenter within the Faculty Appeals Committee. In the event that AD has been brought in to assign penalty on a case before it is escalated to panel or if the AD is in conflict of interest, a PPR designate would be needed; if the UPDs are the PPR designates, CEAS would need to decide whether there would be a PPR designate from CEAS or a UPD from a different unit who could stand in as Faculty Presenter.
- There is an overarching concern regarding distribution of administrative load from current procedures within CEAS. Many of the proposed changes could potentially help to decrease the load at the Unit level but largely transfer that load to the AD Office at the Faculty level which is not set up to take on these additional responsibilities. Currently our procedures are largely undertaken by CEAS, with the assistance of OSAS which has no proposed role in the proposed Policy except in relation to providing a central repository for files.
- With the new proposed process, the initial investigation is led by the Course Director, or the PPR/PPR designate (Page 22, Section 8.4). We anticipate that unit support would still be required at this stage to notify the student of the investigation, track their responses and check for previous offences; therefore, additional resources from the unit would be required at this stage, especially if the number of suspected breaches increases with the option for the CD to manage resolution of specified types of breaches.
- We anticipate that appealing a Course Director's resolution on a case to the Faculty's Appeals Committee would increase the number of files reviewed by the panel and slow down the process.
- CEAS and OSAS agree that appeals made on academic honesty cases should remain as an endeavour overseen by either CEAS and/or the CEAS subcommittee, as opposed to the Faculty of Health Petitions Committee. The Petitions Committee is dedicated to considering student requests to waive a Faculty regulation or deadline, whereas CEAS is responsible for overseeing academic standards for the Faculty. Endeavours that would be undertaken by the Faculty Appeals Committee that are noted in the proposal range from a student disputing the result of an academic honesty investigation (Section 8.4), to

imposing suspension or expulsion from the institution due to their academic honesty case (Section 4.5), to waiving a notation or the destruction of permanent records following a 5-year lapse since the offence (Section 4.9). Such endeavours directly impact the University's academic standards and should therefore remain under the jurisdiction of the one governing body that oversees academic standards in the Faculty.

- CEAS and OSAS agree that the proposed appeal process for academic honesty cases such as those noted above could be undertaken by an ad-hoc panel that can appropriately facilitate the proposed panel process or the Faculty Appeals Committee. This more consistently aligns with the current CEAS subcommittee panel hearings for academic honesty cases. We do not recommend changing such processes to have them under the umbrella of the Petitions Committee which would require significant changes to the current process and additional resources such time and administrative staffing. Maintaining the process with CEAS would require few changes because the proposed changes are consistent with the current process.

5. A new aspect of the Policy and Procedures being proposed in direct response to Faculties' advice and request relates to high volume academic misconduct. Do you think the proposed procedures for high volume academic misconduct address the current challenges in your Faculty?

- Yes, because now students who have a previous breach could not have their files managed through a high volume process, but would have their files escalated to panel hearing. Since some students whose files are handled with through this high volume process may have extenuating circumstances, it seems appropriate for them to have an appeal process through the UPD.

6. Another new element being proposed is the Office of the University Registrar's jurisdiction over investigations related to admissions fraud. Taking into consideration your experience with allegations of this nature in your Faculty, what are your views on this possible change in practice and what are some of the procedural elements that will need to be addressed if this approach is pursued?

- These cases have always been handled by the UOR and not within our Faculty

7. Given the current pandemic situation, you may wish to review the Policy and Procedures through the lens of remote course delivery in order to assess whether they address such circumstances sufficiently.

- The addition of the process for higher volume academic misconduct addresses one of the larger challenges that we are facing. With remote learning, the increased volume of cheating via online systems has increased. This allows files to be addressed in a timely manner.
- Additionally, the added element of allowing a CD to host an exploratory meeting with a student will also support a more expedited process to address potential cases of academic misconduct.

Overall OSAS considerations and support for this process:

HH OSAS team has indicated that they will be able to confirm if student is a first-offender and likely be able to provide a response within 48 hours, however, if the student is a non-HH student, a request will need to be made to their home faculty to confirm if the student has any previous breaches of academic misconduct before responding.

The concern remains from CEAS that since OSAS would be contacting the unit with information about whether the CD can proceed or not, the CD and UPD would potentially be made aware that the student has a previous charge and that process might introduce bias into the unit level resolution process since the CD and UPD would be aware of the second offence.

Ideally there is a need for a centralized location within the Student Information System (similar to the Petitions GUI) where a faculty designate can check to verify if a student has a previous breach of academic misconduct and where information pertaining to the breach can be housed for reference.