

# Academic Integrity Policy

## Westmont College is a Community of Christian Scholars

When students join our college community, they are expected, as apprentice scholars, to search for truth with integrity and accuracy. This quest requires humility about our abilities, respect for the ideas of others, and originality in our thinking. Since Westmont is a Christian community, the integrity of our scholarship is rooted in the integrity of our faith. We seek to be followers of Christ in the classroom, in the library, and on our screens. Violations of academic integrity are a serious breach of trust within the Westmont community because they violate the regard for truth essential to genuine learning and Christian consistency. Such deception also hurts those students who do their work with integrity. Violations of academic integrity may consist of falsification (misrepresenting facts, sources, or methods in any academic project or obligation), cheating (using unauthorized sources of information on an examination or other assignment), or plagiarism (using another's content or ideas without giving proper credit). Violations of academic integrity may also consist of making a quiz, test, essay, or assignment available to others in person, in digital form, or other means—thereby inviting others to cheat, falsify, or plagiarize.

Faculty and students should operate in an environment of mutual trust and respect. Faculty expect students to act in ways consistent with academic integrity. Disciplinary measures provide accountability for all of us to uphold these principles; moreover, such accountability provides a foundation for good work at Westmont and beyond. Thus, for both scholarly and spiritual reasons, falsification, cheating, plagiarism, and all other violations of academic integrity are prohibited within the Westmont community.

## Types of Academic Dishonesty

### Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized creation, alteration, or reporting of information in an academic activity ([NIU, 2023](#)) is prohibited. Examples of such academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Fabrication or falsification of data, analyses, citations or other information for assignments, exams, speeches, or any other academic work: e.g.,
  - Fabricating sources of information: e.g., citing fake sources (possibly generated by AI tools) as credible sources;
  - Unapproved deviation from a predetermined experimental procedure;
  - Unapproved altering or falsifying of data, documents, images, music, art, or other work (including unapproved use of AI tools to create or manipulate audio or visual materials);
  - Unauthorized impersonation of another person to complete an academic activity: e.g., via use of another's device or login ID and password.
- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of official documents, credentials, or signatures;
- Misrepresentation of one's academic accomplishments, experiences, credentials, expertise, research methods, or tools (including unapproved use of generative AI tools);

Withholding information related to admission, transfer credits, disciplinary actions, financial aid, or academic status.

## Cheating and Plagiarism

**Cheating** is obtaining—or aiding another to obtain—credit for work accomplished by deceptive means. Such deception involves a lack of transparency between a student and faculty member. Cheating includes but is not limited to:

- Using unapproved materials or tools such as electronic devices, cheat sheets, or digital translators (e.g., Google Translate) to obtain information for an exam or other assessment;
- Communicating with another student during an exam or other assessment;
- Copying or sharing information from an exam or other assessment;
- Misrepresenting the procedure used to take an exam or complete an assignment (including any group member’s inadequate contribution to required collaborative work [[NIU, 2023](#)]);
- Engaging in *complete or substantial plagiarism*, as defined below.
  - Cheating behaviors exclude “patchwriting” (failed paraphrase), minor citation errors, and other “instances of bad writing to be remedied by pedagogy” ([Jamieson and Howard, 2019](#)). While a course-specific grade penalty may be given, such pedagogy offers an apprentice scholar an opportunity to revise.

**Plagiarism** is intentionally misrepresenting another’s work—e.g., words, line of thought, style, or organizational structure—as our own, thereby committing a form of “theft” ([OED, 2023](#)). This misrepresentation involves a lack of transparency between a student and faculty member about the process used to produce an assignment. Such misrepresentation may violate the rights of people one may never meet; moreover, it may erode trust and violate academic relationships. Instead, properly acknowledging the sources of content and ideas—through academic conventions of citation—cultivates good stewardship of intellectual property.

Two levels of plagiarism are recognized at Westmont, and both are unacceptable in submitted assignments. A student may not submit AI-generated content or ideas (e.g., from ChatGPT or Grammarly) as one’s own original work. Unless a faculty member specifies otherwise, the following general definitions of plagiarism apply.

- **Complete plagiarism** entails any of the following without attribution:
  - Submitting or presenting another's complete published or unpublished work (paper, article, image, or equivalent);
  - Submitting another student's work for an assignment, with or without that person's knowledge or consent;
  - Obtaining a complete digital work—whether written by a person or by AI—and representing it as one’s own work;
  - Submitting the same paper to faculty members in different courses, or reusing or modifying a previously submitted paper (e.g., from another course) for a current assignment without obtaining prior approval from the faculty members involved.
- **Substantial plagiarism** entails any of the following without attribution:

- Submitting or presenting a substantial amount of another’s published or unpublished work (paper, article, image, or equivalent);
- Inserting verbatim sentences (or equivalent) from a source;
- Obtaining a substantial portion of digital work—whether written or generated by another person or by AI—and representing it as one’s own work;
- Combining paraphrasing with verbatim sentences (or equivalent) to create a paragraph or more of text;
- **Repeatedly and pervasively** engaging in textual misuse at the level of phrasing or sentence construction (i.e., failed paraphrase or “patchwriting”) after that misuse has been flagged and after personalized instruction (e.g., in paraphrase) has been offered.
- Using a source’s line of logic, thesis, or ideas. (The source material may be generated by a person or by AI.)
  - In addition to academic integrity concerns, using an AI-assisted line of logic, etc., may not help a student develop the robust critical thinking that is vital to a [Westmont graduate](#).

### **Response to Violations of Academic Integrity**

When a violation of academic integrity is observed, the course instructor determines the severity of the infraction and the ultimate consequence for the assignment or course. For a severe or substantial infraction, a typical result would be a grade of F on the assignment or course.

In all cases, faculty will use an infraction as an opportunity to educate the student about the expectations of academic work. For example, an instructor may require the student to rewrite all or part of an assignment or to complete a new version of an exam or another assessment.

If possible, the instructor will meet with the student to discuss the incident and inform the student that the Provost’s and Student Life offices will be notified of the violation. The student should be informed of the appeal process (described below).

The instructor will notify the Provost’s and Student Life offices of severe or substantial instances of academic dishonesty ([link to report form](#)). For repeated or more severe infractions, other actions may be taken by the college that include but are not limited to a written warning or initiating a student conduct meeting (which could lead to academic probation, suspension, or expulsion).

If instances of plagiarism are discovered after a course or a degree is completed, the level and frequency of plagiarism will be evaluated by the Provost’s office in consultation with relevant faculty members. Consequences may include changing the grade awarded in a course or courses, delaying the awarding of the degree, withholding the degree, or rescinding the degree.

### **Appeals**

A student who feels that he or she has been unfairly accused or unjustly treated regarding violations of the Academic Integrity Policy may appeal to the Academic Integrity Committee, which consists of the

provost (or designee) and the chair of the department in which the violation occurred. If the instructor making the accusation is the department chair, the provost will appoint another member of the faculty to the Committee. Appeals must be in writing and submitted to the Provost's Office during regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) within three calendar days of the decision. If the third day falls on a non-business day, submit appeals via email to provost@westmont.edu.

An appeal must be in writing and include a statement outlining and supporting the specific grounds on which the student is appealing. The appeal is not a rehearing of the original case and the role of the Provost is not to substitute his or her own judgment for the judgment of the original decision. The role of the appeal officer is to determine whether a new decision should be considered due to a procedural error, the availability of new information or the imposition of excessive sanctions. During the appeal process, the Provost may choose to set aside sanctions as appropriate.

Following a prompt and effective review, the Provost will communicate a decision on the student's appeal no later than ten business days following the submission of the appeal. The decision will be communicated in writing to the appealing student. The decision will be in one of the two following forms:

1. Original Decision Upheld: Where review of the original decision does not demonstrate a different decision is warranted, the original decision will be upheld.
2. Original Decision Modified: Where review of the original decision demonstrates support for the appeal and a different decision is warranted, the Provost will modify the original decision. This decision may include sanctions being decreased, modified, or revoked.

The decision on the appeal is final, and no other office will accept or review appeals following the decision.