

Policy Statement on Academic Misconduct

School of Computing
University of Utah
August 1, 2022

Background

This document describes the policies and procedures used by the School of Computing (SoC) relating to academic misconduct of any student enrolled in an SoC course (e.g. CS 4710) or any course that is cross-listed with a SoC course (e.g. ECE 4710). This policy is in effect starting August 1, 2022.

University of Utah policy as defined in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities¹ and College of Engineering policy as defined in the Academic Appeals and Misconduct Policy² also apply.

Computing is a professional discipline and almost all of our graduates pursue a career path where the computing skills that they develop at the University form the very foundation of their skill set. While grades are the normal academic metric, good grades are not the end goal. The long-term key to success is mastery of some aspect of the discipline. Mastery and cheating are diametric opposites. In the workplace, copying without proper attribution has dire consequences. The result is significant financial liability for the company, as well as grounds for termination. In addition, the lack of mastery leads to poor craftsmanship. Consider the life threatening consequences of poor craftsmanship in safety critical systems that are pervasive in medicine, transportation, manufacturing, etc. Large corporations develop and continually refine their codes of professional ethics and employees are typically required to take a refresher course on an annual basis. It is our job to prepare our students to succeed and hopefully to become leaders in their chosen profession. This requires developing both technical and ethical skills. The rules are simple: work hard, master the topic, and do not cheat. If you cheat the consequences will be severe, just as they will be in the workplace.

SoC Academic Misconduct Policy

Any course listed as CS xxxx, COMP xxxx, DS xxxx, or any equivalent course that is cross-listed with CS xxxx, COMP xxxx, or DS xxxx will subsequently be referred to simply as an SoC course.

Violations of this policy are recorded as “strikes” by the SoC. A failing grade sanction in an SoC course counts as one “strike” in a student’s academic record. Two lesser sanctions in SoC courses count as one “strike” in a student’s academic record. Any student with two strikes due to academic misconduct will be subsequently barred from registering for any additional SoC courses, immediately dropped from their respective degree program, and will not be admitted to any future SoC program.

Any student with one strike due to academic misconduct will be subsequently barred from serving as a Teaching Assistant or Teaching Mentee³ in the SoC.

Note that a failing grade sanction still applies even for students who withdraw from the course.

¹<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/guides/students/studentRights.html>

²<https://www.coe.utah.edu/students/academic-affairs/academics/>

³It is at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Students to provide an alternate method for satisfying the Teaching Menteeship requirement.

Any sanction due to academic misconduct can be appealed. If the appeal is successful then the sanction will be lifted. Hence, this policy applies only to sanctions that are not successfully appealed.

Definition of Academic Misconduct

As defined in the University Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information. It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another student to commit an act of academic misconduct. A primary example of academic misconduct would be submitting as one's own, work that is copied from an outside source.

Detailed information on what constitutes academic misconduct for a specific class is defined by the SoC course instructor and will be found in the course syllabus. If a student has questions about the syllabus, they should seek clarification from the instructor.

Use of Misconduct Information

An individual's academic misconduct is tracked by the SoC for all SoC courses. Information about prior offenses is available to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Director of Graduate Studies, the SoC Director, and the SoC office staff involved in administering this policy. Excluding these individuals, SoC course instructors will not have access to this information to avoid unfair scrutiny of previous academic misconduct offenders. This information is used for two purposes: tracking and executing the sanctions detailed in this document, and in informing department hiring decisions, such as for Teaching Assistants and Teaching Mentors. However, sanctions can impact academic standing, which can have indirect impacts (on probation, scholarships, etc.).

Notification of Policy

All students will be notified of the SoC academic misconduct policy both in the course syllabus and by the instructor during the first two weeks in any SoC course. All students enrolled in SoC courses are bound by this policy regardless of being present for such notification.

Sanctions and Appeals at the Course Level

If an instance of academic misconduct is discovered, two options are available to the course instructor:

Fail-the-course option. The default sanction for an offense of academic misconduct is a failing grade for the course. This option is known as a *failing grade sanction*.

Less-than-fail option. As defined in the course syllabus, or due to instructor discretion, an academic misconduct sanction may be less than a failing course grade. Lesser sanctions include but are not limited to a failing grade for an exam, assignment, or other class activity. This option is known as a *lesser sanction*.

In either case, the sanction must be reported to the SoC, as well as the College of Engineering and the University of Utah, and kept in the student's academic record.

For either type of academic misconduct sanction, the steps and timeline for applying academic sanctions are illustrated in the figure at the end of this document. For more information on the appeal process, see the University of Utah Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities⁴.

Should a student need advice or guidance about their appeal, the SoC Director of Undergraduate or Graduate Studies can serve as an informal advisor, and the student is encouraged to seek such help.

Instructor Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of all instructors teaching SoC courses to clearly articulate what constitutes academic misconduct in the syllabus for their course. The syllabus must also provide a link to this policy.
2. The instructor must make the syllabus available on the course web page.
3. The instructor must discuss the SoC's academic misconduct policy and the definition of academic misconduct for a particular course in the first two weeks of the course. The instructor must clearly notify the students of the need to read and understand this policy.

Student Responsibilities

1. Students are required to read and understand this policy, seeking clarification and asking questions as needed, within the first two weeks of class.

⁴<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html#section4> Section IV.B

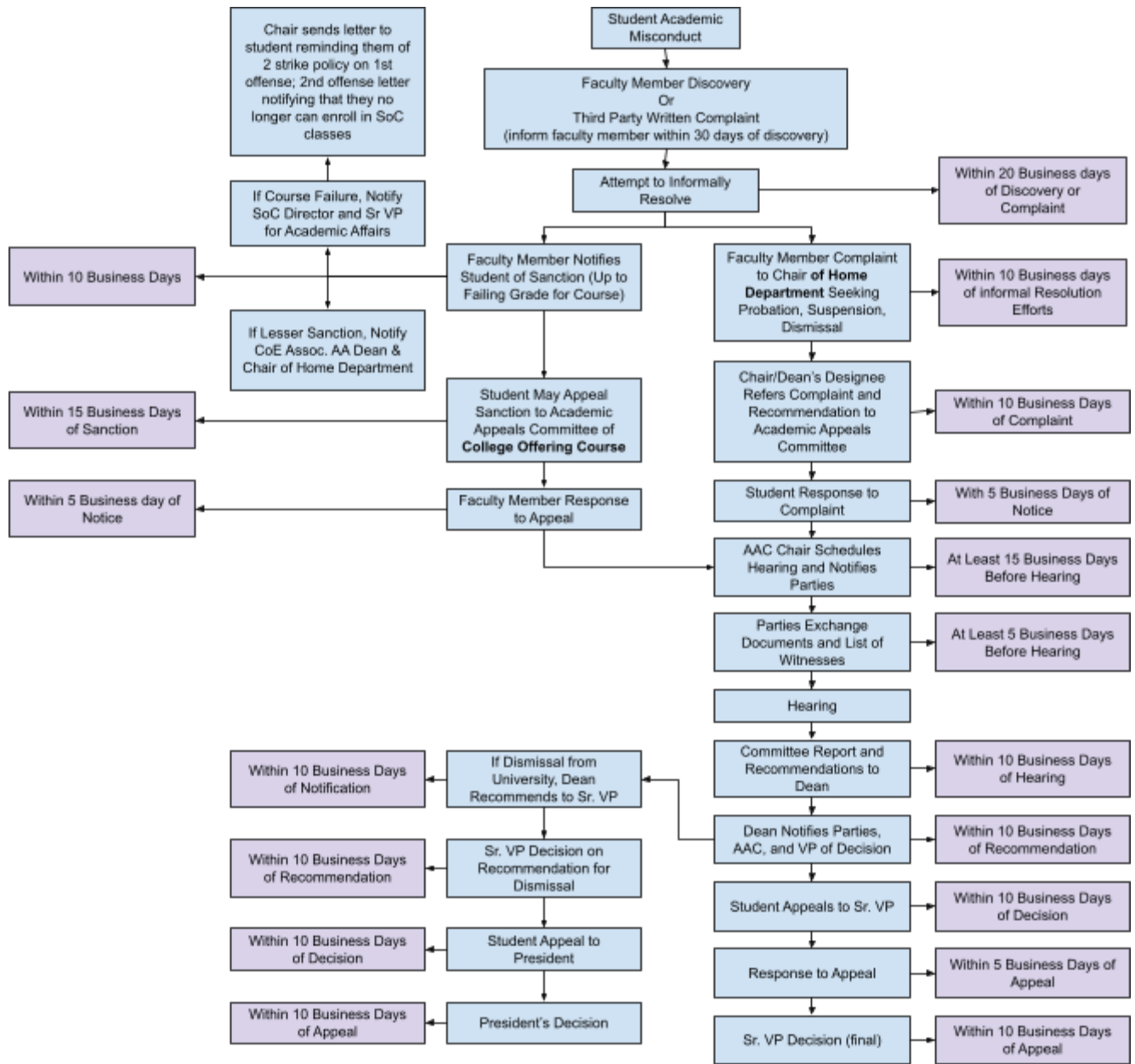


Figure 1: Academic Misconduct Process Illustrated