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Academic Authenticity Process and Policy

Importance of Having an Academic Authenticity Policy

Maestro's Academic Authenticity Policy protects the integrity of student work and the degrees offered by the University by ensuring each student's work is the student's original thoughts and ideas, and that their degree is earned through their commitment to education and demonstration of learning outcomes.

Purpose

Maestro University's Academic Authenticity Policy and Procedures establish a process for identifying breaches of academic honesty and specifies consequences students will have for violating the policy.

Maestro University uses applications (apps) for assessing plagiarism and artificial intelligence (A.I.). These apps compare a student's work against original sources and other databases. Students may be expected to submit their work for originality checks. Exam responses may be reviewed by the academic administration if plagiarism or A.I.-generated content is suspected. See the "plagiarism" definition below. To ensure academic integrity, the faculty may supplement the evaluate a student's summative assessments (e.g., final exams and final projects) by hosting a videoconference to allow students to defend in real time the content of their projects and final exams and to demonstrate their mastery of course competencies.

What is Academic Authenticity?

The University insists on academic integrity and honesty and requires all student submissions reflect the honest, ethical, and accurate representation of a student's academic work and record. Students are required to attest to the originality of all project submissions.

The Council of Writing Program Administration defines plagiarism as follows: "When a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original material (not common knowledge) without acknowledging its source."

Plagiarism includes copying someone else's work without using correct citation and/or attribution for example, copying materials without attribution from Wikipedia is plagiarism.

Course competencies are clearly articulated, so a student who attempts to modify a project prepared for one course so that it will meet the requirements of another course is likely to find the results unsatisfactory. Maestro's plagiarism apps compare prior submissions of a student's project with previous submissions by the student and other at the University.



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Maestro University recognizes that instances of plagiarism can occur due to a student misunderstanding or lack of knowledge about standards and practices of citation and attribution.

However, it is the student's responsibility, as part of their academic development, to learn about and to adhere to rules of appropriate citation and attribution. When evidence suggests that plagiarism has occurred due to the lack of a student's understanding of citation guidelines, faculty are encouraged to work with the student to provide them with an opportunity to correct the issues and resubmit work. It is within the faculty's discretion to determine whether to allow the student to resubmit the assignment, fail the student on the assignment, or fail the student in the course. The faculty is expected to consult the Academic Director so previous events can be reviewed and weighed.

Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Unauthorized collaboration between two or more students on a course project, assessment, or assignment.
- Sharing quiz or final examination questions or answers in public forums (e.g., internet sites, blogs, etc.) without the University's express written consent.
- Using Internet access, resources, A.I. apps, or any other source while taking a final exam.
- Submitting academic records (e.g., transcripts) that have been altered in any way or are fraudulent.
- Submitting work not written or created by the student. Examples are papers purchased from others, prepared by ghost-writers, or produced by A.I. apps (e.g., ChatGPT, Genesis, Grammarly, CoPilot, or Grok).

Violations of the Academic Authenticity policy will become part of the student's record.

Depending on the severity and/or frequency of the violation(s), Academic Director and faculty may take disciplinary action.

This could include submitting a formal recommendation to the University administration that the student be withdrawn from the University. A student who has become subject to disciplinary action may submit an appeal to the Academic Director, per the University's Appeals and Grievances policy.

[Cited Material](#)

The University's guideline is that no more than 30% of a student's work be cited material. Of that 30%, no more than 15% can be from one single source. It is noted that some courses may have content that brings



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up a higher match to other sources due to the same material needed to pass the assignment, such as math formulas or theories. Each occurrence of a match outside these parameters will result in an evaluation by a qualified evaluator and/or the Academic Director.

Cited material is documented within the student's work following APA style. A student must properly cite unoriginal work (e.g., ideas, opinions, claims), making patently clear the original source. APA's style manual provides guidance on proper citations, and students are expected to follow APA style. A student's projects/papers may not be graded if an originality report shows a percentage higher than 30% of cited materials and may be considered "unoriginal" when it exceeds 30%. APA provides guidance on how to properly site writing tools or A.I. language generation apps. Besides referencing the A.I. app on the Reference Page of a project, Maestro strongly encourages students to proofread closely, verify content, and double-check accuracy and links to references because A.I. apps make mistakes, but the student has to own them.

Measuring and Ensuring Academic Authenticity

Students must take exams in a quiet room where they will not be interrupted during the examination period. If there are concerns with an exam, the University reserves the right to flag the exam for review. The instructor may determine not to grade an exam due to infractions and then requests the Academic Director's assistance for further investigation. Severe infractions will result in a failing grade on the final exams, and by calculation a failing grade for the course. The student will be permitted to repeat the course on a first infraction. If it is a second infraction, the student may be terminated from the University. All infractions are recorded in the student's record.

Maestro University uses plagiarism and originality software to evaluate the authenticity of performance assessments and project work. Students may use plagiarism software before final submission of their work to check for originality and make corrections to their work. In the case where a plagiarism report suggests a score of 30% or above (non-original/sited single source), the submission may not be graded by the instructor. The report will be used to determine the action taken if the matches are higher than the set guideline. Once students have turned in their work under Final Submission, the project is recorded in Maestro's Canvas LMS. In cases where the instructor deems the infraction as severe (i.e., copying another student paper entirely, second or third infractions, purchased papers, A.I.-generated work, etc.), the instructor will make a recommendation to the Academic Director and refer the submission to them for a final decision.

Evidence

Evidence consists of the originally submitted student paper, along with a plagiarism and/or originality check for a performance assessment or project. Copies of evidence will be provided to the student upon request



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and put in the student record.

Consequences for Academic Authenticity Violations on Projects

First Violation: Student receives feedback with their submission where the percentage is too high for originality. The instructor cautions the student on their work. The instructor informs the student that they need to reduce the cited material to be within university guidelines by using their own original thoughts and ideas. The instructor will mark the gradebook with an incomplete until a resubmission is made, and the violation is cleared. An incomplete on the assignment may change to a failing grade if the student does not resubmit the document before the course closes.

First Written Warning: The student receives a formal letter of warning from the Academic Director informing the student that they submitted work over the allowed originality percentage as a Final Submission. A first warning will be given, and the student will be given a “0” for the assessment. A copy of documentation will be attached to the student’s file in the Student Information System.

Second Written Warning: The student automatically fails the course. They will get a second written warning and will be required to meet with the Academic Director before they can continue their studies.

Severe Infractions: The student is referred to the Academic Standards Committee. The Academic Standards Committee will decide what action to take, which may include expulsion and potential removal of a student’s degree.

All written warnings become part of the student’s record and will remain on file until the student graduates or is withdrawn from the University.

Appeals

For either a verbal or written violation, a student may appeal the instructor’s decision by writing a formal explanation of the offense and providing documentation by emailing the Academic Director. Grade appeals must be made within 90 days of the posting of the final course grade.

The Academic Standards Committee is comprised of the President, Academic Director, Registrar, and Accounting Director. The Academic Director may invite faculty to participate in an

Academic Standards Committee. The Academic Standards Committee hears appeals for a Second Written Warning or a Severe Infraction.



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Students have the right to request a meeting to review material regarding the offense if they believe the ruling of the Academic Director is incorrect.

- If the student fails to appear at the agreed-upon time or within 30 days of the written warning, the consequence will stand.
- The burden of proof rests with the student.
- The Academic Standards Committee will review the new information, hear the student's case, and decide to reverse, impose other terms, or uphold the decision.

The Academic Dean in accordance with the Academic Standards Committee will notify the student within five business days, in writing, of the decision on the appeal.

Continuance of Coursework

A student accused of a violation but under appeal may continue to work in their course until the Academic Standards Committee decides the case. If the final decision results in expulsion or dismissal from the school, the student will be given a withdrawal (WN) in the course on the official transcript and any work in the course will be void.

Other Ways Academic Authenticity Violations May be Identified

If the student is suspected of paying someone or an application to produce a project (e.g., used a ghostwriter or A.I. application like ChatGPT), Academics (e.g. faculty and the Academic Director) may conduct an internet search and/or use originality testing apps find and compare content and assess originality. The student's previous work may also be reviewed. If evidence is found that the student paid for a ghostwriter or generative language app to produce a paper, concealing the original author or creator, the student will be referred to the Academic Standards Committee and may receive the same consequences as stated above.

Sanctions

- **Expulsion:** A student is withdrawn from the University with no provision for readmission. The student will be withdrawn from all current courses and will receive a "WN" grade in each.
- **Dismissal:** A student is administratively withdrawn from the University for at least one year. The student will be withdrawn from all courses, including courses outside of the one in question, and will receive a "WN" grade in each. WN stands for "withdrawn failing."
- **Course Failure:** A student will receive an "F" for a second warning or a severe infraction for the course in which the infraction occurred.