

Molecular Biology and Biological Chemistry Programs Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures addressed in this document describe the Programs' implementation of the Standards of Academic Performance (Section IV) and Standards of Academic Conduct (Section V) described in the University's Student Code.

Purpose

The Molecular Biology and Biological Chemistry Programs take matters of academic misconduct very seriously because absolute trust is required for successful academic research and training, and because integrity and reputation are the currency on which scientists are evaluated and rewarded. Scientific misconduct can seriously harm the education and science and can ruin careers and institutional reputations. To assure academic integrity, the Programs have established the following internal procedures that implement the University's Student Code. To ensure that the student has adequate counsel, the student's academic advisor will serve as an advisor and advocate for the student throughout any misconduct proceedings.

Informal Resolution

The Student Code and the Programs encourage informal resolution of minor problems involving academic standards. Students are urged to discuss problems with the involved instructor(s), their academic advisor, the Program Director, and/or the dean. However, with serious violations or cases of multiple instances, a more formal resolution is required.

Standards of Academic Performance (see Section IV of the University Student Code)

Instructor-Initiated Academic Actions

As written in the Student Code (A), faculty members are qualified professionals capable of judging the academic performance of students in their courses. The instructor has the right to assign any final grade (including credit/no credit and pass/fail) that they feel appropriately reflects the student's performance in the course. The student has the right to appeal this grade but only on the grounds that the grade assignment was "arbitrary and capricious" (as defined in the student code). For the purpose of the appeals process, the Program Director will function as the chair as defined in Student Code (B.1).

Program-Initiated Academic Actions

The Program office will monitor student's progress throughout the year and inform the student, the student's advisor, the chair of the Advising committee, and Program Director of perceived failures to meet Program-defined academic performance standards. These failures may include, but are not limited to: 1) failure to pass all core courses with a grade of B- or better; 2) a cumulative GPA of less than 3.0; and 3) unsatisfactory completion of laboratory rotations. If it is determined that the student has failed to meet the relevant academic standards of the Program, the Director will inform the student in writing of any academic action which may include probation, loss of financial support or dismissal from the Program.

Standards of Academic Misconduct (see Section V of the University Student Code)

Definitions

Cases of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to: 1) plagiarism, 2) cheating, 3) misrepresenting one's work, 4) fabrication or falsification of information, 5) disobeying any rule specified by the Program Rules for Exams and Homework Assignments (see below), and 6) intentionally helping, or attempting to help, another person commit an act of misconduct.

Program Notification

Instructors, course leaders, other faculty, academic advisors, students, and the Program Director must notify the Program office in writing of any perceived instances of academic misconduct that occur during the year. All cases of misconduct will be documented in the student's file.

Potential Levels of Academic Sanction

Students committing misconduct can expect varying levels of sanction; A) sanctions imposed by the instructor(s), B) sanctions imposed by the Program, and C) sanctions imposed by the University. An instructor can impose a maximum sanction of failing the student in the course. The Program can recommend to the appropriate College AAC that the student's financial support be rescinded, that the student be suspended or dismissed from the Program and/or that the student be suspended or dismissed from the University. In appropriate circumstances, the Program or the University can seek to revoke a previously awarded degree.

A. Instructor Sanctions

Within thirty (30) business days, anyone who witnesses or discovers academic misconduct should file a written complaint with the faculty member in charge of the academic activity in which the alleged violation occurred (V-B.1). Within twenty (20) business days, the instructor should discuss the allegation and allow the student to respond. The faculty member is encouraged to consult with the Program Director to learn of historical precedence involving similar cases to help promote equity across courses. Within ten (10) business days after the discussion, the faculty member should provide written notification to the student of any academic sanctions to be levied and of the student's right to appeal. Copies should also be submitted to the Program office and to the Program Director. Sanctions may include: requiring the student to rewrite papers or retake exams, assigning a reduced or failing grade for the activity or, at most, failing the student in the course (V-B.3).

The student has the right to appeal the instructor's decision, but only on the grounds that the decision was arbitrary and capricious (V-B.5). The student should file a written appeal to the relevant Academic Appeals Committee (AAC), which is that of the College of Science for the Biological Chemistry Program or the School of Medicine for the Molecular Biology Program, within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the academic sanction.

If the instructor thinks that the violation is egregious enough to warrant a more severe sanction, such as probation or dismissal from the Program or University, then he/she should submit a complaint to the Program Director and to the appropriate AAC within thirty (30) business days of becoming aware of the incident. The instructor should indicate in the written notification to the student that he/she has undertaken this action. This right of the instructor is accommodated in Section V-B.6 of the Student Code.

B. Program Review and College/University Sanctions

Two triggering events can result in Program review of academic misconduct cases: 1) an instructor submits a complaint to the Program Director recommending probation, or dismissal from the Program or University based on a particularly egregious misconduct event (see above), or 2) the Program becomes aware of multiple acts of academic misconduct by a single student. In either case, the Program Director will review the case and forward the complaint to the appropriate AAC with the Director's own recommendation for sanctions within ten (10) days of receiving the instructor's complaint and recommendation (V-B.6) or from receiving notice of the last act of misconduct (V-B.7).

Possible sanctions to be imposed by the appropriate AAC include, 1) placing the student on probation, 2) Rescission of the student's stipend, insurance, tuition and/or other financial resources , and/or 3) suspension or dismissal from the Program, and/or 4) suspension or dismissed from the University.

Program Rules for Exams and Homework Assignments

The following rules apply for all exams and written assignments unless specifically contradicted by the course instructor.

- 1) a student must work entirely alone.
- 2) a student may not share information about any aspect of the exam with anyone
- 3) a student must direct all questions concerning the exam or homework assignment to the course instructor or teaching assistant.
- 4) it is the student's responsibility to obtain clarification from the instructor if there are questions concerning these requirements.
- 5) a student may not plagiarize.