

Warning Level Academic Integrity Violations: FAQ and Teaching Tips from the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence

Q. What constitutes a Warning Level academic integrity violation? A potential violation is a Warning Level Violation when it does not meet the standards of a Level 1 Violation, the assignment in question is not worth more than 10% of the overall grade, the potential violation does not involve more than five students who may have collaboratively violated the Academic Integrity policies, and the instructor will not level a grade penalty of Course Failure.

- **Teaching Tip:** Instructors can proactively encourage academic integrity and reduce potential violations by doing frequent checks to ensure students understand academic integrity policies. For instance, have students complete the online SU Academic Integrity Quiz and discuss the answers in class or include a required assignment summarizing policies in their own words.

Q. What is the advantage of resolving a potential Warning Level academic integrity violation independently with students and not through the formal hearing process? The Warning Level meeting offers students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes without incurring a significant grade-related penalty and it offers instructors the opportunity to directly support a student's future academic success.

- **Teaching Tip:** A Warning Level meeting can help students improve their understanding of academic integrity and build a valuable academic skill that they need in order to succeed in college. Many violations of academic integrity policies are rooted in fear of a failing grade or misinformation and this conversation gives instructors a way to mitigate student fears and clarify misunderstandings.

Q. What are the first steps to prepare for a Warning Level meeting with a student? First, review the Warning Level Guide for Instructors provided by the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS): <https://teachingexcellence.syr.edu/resources/academic-integrity/>. Then begin filling out the Academic Integrity Warning Form provided by CLASS. Next, notify the student via email. CLASS provides an email template (see page three of this handout) that instructors can cut and paste and adapt as needed.

- **Teaching Tip:** To make the Warning Level meeting a truly productive learning moment for students, instructors need to have previously established trust with students. Demonstrating approachability, clearly communicating expectations, and making assignments as transparent as possible are evidence-based teaching strategies that build trust and convey care for students' academic success.

Q. How should instructors prepare for the Warning Level meeting? Be ready to show in detail the evidence of the suspected violation and all necessary information about the policies. Also, prepare for students' emotional or defensive responses. Choose a time and place for the meeting and use phrasing during the meeting that encourages listening and calm. For instructors navigating racialized and gendered stereotypes about academic expertise, or other biases that may manifest during the meeting, take any steps necessary to ensure your own safety and professional well-being, such as taking detailed notes and knowing the procedure for reporting violations of Community Standards.

- **Teaching Tip:** Consider using statements such as: "Thank you for meeting with me today." "I appreciate that you want to do well in this class." "I understand that this isn't easy to talk about." "I can see that you are upset." "I care about your success in this class and the rest of your academic career, so that's why I want to help you understand what happened here and to avoid this in the future." "Let's look at the syllabus and make a plan for how you can successfully complete our class." "Everyone makes mistakes but it's what you choose to learn from your mistakes that defines you."

Q. What if I suspect a student used generative AI in a way that violated my stated syllabus policy?

Helping students learn how to use generative AI appropriately is a new, complex, and vital part of helping students build academic integrity skills. There is not currently and most likely will never be a reliable automatic tool such as Turnitin for detecting AI usage, and instructors cannot submit cases to CLASS with AI-detection results as the only evidence of an Academic Integrity Violation. Therefore, the one-on-one Warning Level meeting and resolution, which does not incur a large grade penalty, is an especially effective means for supporting student learning about AI-related academic integrity while maintaining high academic standards.

- **Teaching Tip:** Because of the rapidly evolving nature of generative AI and the wide variety of ways people are using it, it's especially important that instructors clearly convey their policy and check that students fully understand the AI-specific policies in the class. Instructors should check and recheck for student understanding frequently throughout the class, and always right before a major assignment or test. Working collaboratively with students at the beginning of a class to craft the AI-specific Academic Integrity policies is one effective way to increase student understanding.

Q. What if a student has incurred frequent Warning Level infractions? After the Warning Level meeting and resolution, instructors must report the Violation to CLASS, which maintains a record of all violations. CLASS will proceed with additional charges after one Warning Level Violation, in a scaffolded manner.

- **Teaching Tip:** Scaffolding or chunking major high stakes assignments into smaller assignments is the single most effective strategy for reducing all types of Academic Integrity Violations. It decreases students' fear of a poor grade and incentivizes students' efforts to complete their own original work. Similarly, assessing student learning using alternatives to high stakes timed exams is a proven means for reducing Academic Integrity Violations. Visit the CTLE website teaching resource page <https://teachingexcellence.syr.edu/resources/alternatives-to-timed-exams/> for more ideas.

Q. As the subject area experts, instructors have a lot of content to cover. Why should they also be spending time and effort on teaching academic integrity skills? Rather than viewing it as something students should automatically know and understand, instructors need to see academic integrity as a part of the college curriculum. It's everyone's responsibility to help students learn how to exercise academic integrity. Remember that it's our main job as college educators is not to catch students doing something wrong but rather to help all the students in our classes successfully increase their skills and abilities.

- **Teaching Tip:** Approach academic integrity with an instructor's growth mindset: it's a skill that we can and should help all students build and achieve. Rather than viewing student work in this area primarily through a deficit lens (what students are lacking), a more productive, inclusive, and equity-minded pedagogical approach is to help students identify how to increase and build their skills with practice, support, and appropriate effort.

Warning Meeting Request emails should include the following:

- More than one meeting time
- A copy of the completed Academic Integrity Warning Form
- A request that students bring all relevant materials to the meeting
- Suggestion that student writes or records their own summary of the relevant materials
- Information for the student about how to contact the Academic Integrity team

Email Template for Meeting Request

Email Subject Line: Academic Integrity Concern Meeting Request

Dear STUDENT NAME,

A concern about ASSIGNMENT has come to my attention, and I would like us to meet to discuss it. Regardless of your intent, I believe you may have violated the Academic Integrity policy, and it is important for us to talk about this matter further. Specifically, I am concerned about X and X.

I am available to meet IN PERSON/VIA ZOOM the following times:

Option 1

Option 2

Option 3

To prepare for this meeting, I have attached the Academic Integrity Warning Form with the summary of my findings. Review it prior to our meeting to help you prepare for our discussion. We will work through the rest of this document together when we meet. It is a good idea to gather any additional draft, notes, or resources you used throughout your process. If you have feedback from the Writing Center, that would be helpful, too. These documents will provide me with clarity and better determine our next steps. (Any additional relevant information or documents you provide may help clarify whether your actions could be considered a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.)

Per the Academic Integrity Policy, if I do not receive a reply from you by X DATE (7 BUSINESS days from today), I am required to submit an Academic Integrity Incident Report to the Center for Learning and Student Success for further investigation by the Academic Integrity Office team.

These processes are a valuable learning experience for everyone involved. I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this process, but if you would like to talk with another person, please contact the Academic Integrity team by emailing aio@syr.edu, or by calling 315-443- 5412. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
PROFESSOR [NAME]