



**Frequently Asked Questions
Regarding the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline**

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Community Standards

The primary purposes of regulations and discipline in a university are to protect the well-being of the community and to advance its educational mission by defining and establishing certain norms of behavior. The rules and policy statements that are set forth in *Rights Rules Responsibilities* serve mainly to clarify commonly accepted standards of behavioral and academic conduct within the University.

The central purposes of a university are the pursuit of truth, the discovery of new knowledge through scholarship and research, the teaching and general development of students, and the transmission of knowledge and learning to society at large. (RRR 1.1.1) The ability of the

University to achieve its purposes depends upon the quality and integrity of the academic work that its faculty, staff, and students perform. Academic freedom can flourish only in a community of scholars which recognizes that intellectual integrity, with its accompanying rights and responsibilities, lies at the heart of its mission. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

At Princeton, disciplinary proceedings have a role that is subordinate to positive guidance, rational admonition, and reasonable appeal to members of the University to observe its stated norms. The disciplinary system establishes procedures for a fair hearing, including advising individuals fully of the charges against them, affording them ample opportunity to speak on their behalf, and requiring a clear explanation of their rights of appeal. Disciplinary proceedings are instituted only for violations of standards of conduct defined in advance and published, or for actions that can be reasonably deduced as violations in light of those specifically defined as such.

Having clear processes and outcomes in support of our community standards is crucial to the mission of the University. This **Frequently Asked Questions** document seeks to help clarify aspects of the Committee on Discipline process that underpins the institution's core values. For more information about the Residential College Disciplinary Board process, see <https://odus.princeton.edu/community-standards/committees> and the linked Frequently Asked Questions.

1. Who adjudicates alleged disciplinary violations by undergraduate students?

The Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline (COD) adjudicates all alleged violations of **academic integrity regulations** other than those violations that fall under the jurisdiction of the Honor Committee. The COD also adjudicates charges of **non-academic violations** when the student charged could, if found responsible, be separated from the University—that is, when the student could be subject to a suspension, suspension with conditions, a withheld degree, or expulsion.

There are several other judicial authorities at Princeton.¹

- The Honor Committee adjudicates alleged violations of the Honor Code in or regarding in-class examinations.
- Where separation from the University is not a likely outcome, and where clear precedents exist, the Residential College Disciplinary Board (RCDB) may adjudicate non-academic charges against undergraduates.
- Title IX panels convened by the Vice Provost adjudicate alleged acts of sexual misconduct and other Title IX issues.

Graduate students should consult *RRR* section 2.6.

¹ For more information about the procedures followed by RCDB, see *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities* section 2.5.3 and a separate FAQ on this topic, available on the ODUS website. For more information about the Title IX process, see <https://sexualmisconduct.princeton.edu/> and *RRR* section 1.3. For more information about the Honor Committee, see *RRR* section 2.3 or visit www.princeton.edu/honor/. If you are a graduate student, consult section 2.6 of *RRR*.

2. **Who is on the Committee on Discipline?**

The full COD comprises six members of the faculty, eight undergraduate students, and the deputy dean of the college. The dean of undergraduate students serves as chair of the committee; the deputy dean of the college may replace her as chair. The chair serves without vote except in the event of a tie. An associate or assistant dean of undergraduate students serves as secretary. The secretary does not vote.

A quorum of the committee consists of two members of the faculty and three students.

3. **How are alleged disciplinary violations reported?**

Generally, alleged **academic integrity violations**, such as plagiarism, are reported by instructors to the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students (ODUS). Occasionally students voice concerns about possible academic integrity violations.

A majority of **non-academic** alleged infractions come to the attention of ODUS through reports from the Department of Public Safety (DPS), although they can be received from other community members as well.

4. **May one student file a complaint of misconduct against another student?**

Yes, if you believe that you have been the victim of, or have witnessed, a violation of University rules and regulations, you are strongly encouraged to contact your assistant dean for student life (DSL) or a dean in ODUS. Remember that undergraduates are obliged to report suspected violations of the Honor Code to the chair of the Honor Committee by emailing honor@princeton.edu.

5. **Will my report be kept confidential?**

If you choose to file a report through your DSL or a dean in ODUS and prefer to remain anonymous, every attempt will be made to accommodate you in this regard. However, your anonymity cannot be guaranteed. If a student is charged with a disciplinary violation, that student will have the right to review all information that will be considered by the Committee on Discipline or RCDB when adjudicating the charge, and it may be necessary to disclose your name.

Note that the University maintains an EthicsPoint hotline where anyone may make an anonymous report: 1-866-478-9804 or princetonuniversity.ethicspoint.com. (For cases that fall under the jurisdiction of the Honor Committee, students who report an alleged violation of the Honor Code remain anonymous under their process).

6. Who follows up on reports of alleged misconduct? What is that process like? Can I do my own investigation?

If there is a report of possible misconduct on your part, here's what will happen: A dean or other investigator will reach out to you to discuss the matter. You will be asked to give your side of the story. You'll be invited to identify any witnesses who may have relevant information, or to identify any documents (photos, videos, emails, text messages, etc.) that may be pertinent. The dean/investigator will take notes and explain next steps. You will be invited to write a statement in your own words.

The dean/investigator will interview any other witnesses and collect documents.

You are strongly discouraged from doing any "detective work" yourself. Please refrain from directly contacting potential witnesses and discussing the case while it is in progress. This policy helps safeguard the integrity of the information-gathering process and helps prevent the real or perceived experience of pressure, retaliation, or coercion. Instead, tell the dean/investigator about any witnesses who should be interviewed and any other relevant information, and s/he will take care of it.

7. How long will the information-gathering process take?

The University seeks to conduct disciplinary adjudications with reasonable promptness. The information-gathering process will proceed as quickly as possible.

8. Who decides whether a student will be charged with a disciplinary violation?

At the conclusion of the information-gathering process, the chair of the COD, in consultation with other University officials as appropriate, will determine whether the University will charge you with one or more violations of University policy. Remember that being charged is not the same thing as being found responsible.

9. How will I know what I am charged with? When can I see the documents?

At the end of the information-gathering process:

- (1) The secretary or assistant secretary of the Committee will meet with you to review the charges and to go over COD standards and procedures;
- (2) You will be notified in writing of the specific charge(s) that the COD will consider and the date on which the matter will be decided;
- (3) You will be provided with copies of all documents that the COD will refer to in deciding your case. Read these documents carefully, and if anything is missing or incomplete, contact the secretary of the Committee.

10. **I have been charged with a violation of University policy. I have been told the case will be heard by the COD. What do I do next?**

A student whose case will be heard by the COD should do the following.

- (a) **Decide who will serve as your adviser.** Your adviser may be any person in the current residential University community.

You may wish to consider asking your [residential college dean, assistant dean for student life, or assistant dean for studies](#) to advise you, because as members of the residential college staff, these individuals all have a great deal of experience in the disciplinary process. They can be helpful in providing emotional and procedural support, such as offering advice regarding your response to the charges before you, helping you review evidence or case documents, highlighting areas of questioning or inconsistencies that the Committee may want to explore, and providing feedback on statements or documents that you may wish to submit to the Committee for consideration. Members of the residential college staff can also play a key role in helping you think about and access resources related to other areas of your time at Princeton that may be impacted during a COD hearing, such as your health and well-being, academic commitments, financial aid, and other personal and co-curricular considerations.

Although residential college deans, assistant deans for student life and assistant deans for studies are very experienced in serving as advisors, the only requirement is that your advisor must be a member of the University community. For example, you may choose a faculty member or administrator if you wish (but not a retired faculty or staff member, or Princeton alumnus).

You may also elect to choose a Peer Representative as your advisor or as an additional confidential resource. The Peer Representatives are a group of students who are trained to provide support to students undergoing academic integrity processes. They can provide emotional support, offer advice about any statements or evidence you wish to present, and generally help you navigate the hearing process. The role of the Peer Representatives differs depending on whether they serve as an advisor or an additional resource. When serving as advisors, they can know the full details of your case. However, when serving as additional resources, they can provide emotional support but will not be provided with the details of your case unless you choose to share details with them. To get in touch with the Peer Representatives, please contact the Co-Chairs at the following email addresses: Caroline Subbiah: qsubbiah@princeton.edu or Zachary Sahin: zsahin@princeton.edu.

Your adviser can help you with many things, including:

- Reviewing the documents that have been provided to you;
- Discussing whether additional documents, statements or other information should be considered by the COD in deciding your case;
- Drafting statements you would like to communicate to the Committee;
- Helping you anticipate questions that may be asked during the hearing.

- (b) **Make an appointment to speak with your assistant dean for student life**, even if you have chosen a different adviser. Your assistant dean will be able to assist you in many ways as you prepare for a COD hearing, including connecting you with resources and support that may be available to you during and after the process.
- (c) **Contact the secretary of the Committee with any questions** about the charges, the procedures and standards the COD will follow, or any other concern about your case.
- (d) **If you are a student athlete**, meet with Associate Director of Athletics Kelly Widener (kw2@princeton.edu or 258-5312) and the Associate Dean of the College Alec Dun (Athletic Advising) (jamesdun@princeton.edu or 258-1402) as soon as possible.
- (e) **Consider making an appointment at Counseling and Psychological Services** or with another confidential counselor (e.g., the chaplains, SHARE, the University Ombuds officer) for confidential support and guidance. CPS can be reached at 258-3285.
- (f) **Talk to your parents**. It is easier for parents to hear about a disciplinary matter before it is resolved, rather than after the fact.
- (g) **Review the documents** with which you have been provided. If there are **any additional witnesses** who should be interviewed, or **any additional documents** that should be provided to the COD, contact Dean Shueh (secretary), Dean Blount (assistant secretary) and/or the investigator as soon as possible. You are strongly advised not to contact any witnesses about the case; instead, tell Dean Shueh, Dean Blount and/or the investigator about questions that should be asked of witnesses. You may also write a statement yourself.
- (h) **Review *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities***, especially the passages that describe the misconduct you are alleged to have committed. Look at section 2.5.2 for a description of the COD process.
- (i) **Think about the opening and closing statements** that you will be invited to read during the hearing. Make notes and write drafts and discuss them with your adviser.

11. What are my rights and opportunities as a respondent during a COD hearing?

They are as follows:

- You will receive written notice of the charge(s) to be considered by the COD, as well as the time, date and place of the hearing.
- You will receive copies of all documents to be considered by the COD in advance of the hearing.

- You may be accompanied by an adviser, selected from within the current residential University community.
- You may be present during the entire hearing. Committee deliberations are closed.
- You may make opening and closing statements at the hearing. The general structure of the hearing is as follows: the Chair will introduce the Committee members and explain some ground rules; you will have a chance to make an opening statement; the instructor (if any) will have a chance to comment; the Committee members will ask questions of you; you will have a chance to make a closing statement at the end; and your advisor will have an opportunity to add any comments at the end.
- Witnesses who have been interviewed or have submitted written statements or investigators may be asked to be available at the hearing; you may request to question any available witness.
- You will normally be informed of the outcome in person (or by Zoom or telephone if an in-person meeting is not possible) the day after the hearing, and will receive written confirmation of the decision in the days that follow.

12. How does the COD make decisions? What are the possible penalties?

At the conclusion of the hearing, you and your adviser will be excused, and the COD will deliberate in closed session.

COD members first consider the question of whether there is clear and persuasive evidence of conduct that amounts to one or more of the violations of University policy with which the respondent has been charged. This decision is made by majority vote.

If you are found responsible for one or more violations, the COD will consider the appropriate penalty. If you are found responsible for a violation of University policy, there will always be a sanction. The COD has the authority to impose any of the penalties listed at section 1.1.7 of *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities*, which include a dean's warning, reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, suspension with conditions, a withheld degree or expulsion. Where appropriate, the COD may accompany the sanction with censure, campus service, housing restrictions, restrictions on access to resources, space or activities, restitution for damages or educational refresher programs. In an academic case, the COD will be guided by this language:

In determining the seriousness of the offense, the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline will consider whether the student ought reasonably to have understood that his or her actions were in violation of University regulations. If the committee concludes that this threshold has been met, the penalty will normally be a suspension from the University for one semester or one year (at times a suspension with conditions).

Egregious academic integrity violations on the senior thesis or repeated violations may be grounds for expulsion. While the failure to fulfill the general requirements for acknowledgment of sources in academic work may not be determined to reach this level of seriousness, any such failure will be considered an academic infraction and will normally result in a disciplinary penalty. (*RRR* 2.4.6, 2.4.7 and 2.4.8.)

At this stage of the COD's deliberations, the secretary will disclose whether the student has a previous disciplinary record. The COD considers relevant precedents, among other factors, and determines the appropriate penalty, again by majority vote. Please note that students who are suspended for one semester will need to be away from campus for one year (a one semester suspension followed by a one semester leave of absence). Students who are suspended are not eligible to apply to return out of phase. See question 14 of this FAQ document for more information.

13. If I am found responsible for an academic integrity infraction, what happens to my grade in the class?

If you are suspended and the suspension is applied to the current semester, then your grade in the class will not appear on the transcript. If you are suspended but finish the current semester or are placed on disciplinary probation, then the grade in the class will be reflected on your transcript. The grade in the class is within the discretion of your instructor and is separate from any penalty that the COD imposes. If you are found responsible for an academic integrity infraction, your instructor has the discretion to issue a grading penalty (for example, a 0 on the exam or assignment or an F in the course). You may contact your instructor if you have any questions about your grade. If you do not feel comfortable contacting your instructor, please let Dean Shueh or Dean Blount know.

14. Who will be informed about the outcome?

You and your advisor will be informed of the outcome the day after the hearing.

Disciplinary records are highly confidential. Only Princeton University officials with a professional need to know, such as the student's residential college staff, and the instructor in an academic integrity case, will be informed about the outcome. With very few exceptions (e.g., in cases implicating Title IX), disciplinary records are not disclosed to other students. Disciplinary records are not disclosed to outside parties without the student's written consent or in rare cases, without a lawful subpoena.

Separations from the University (suspensions, suspensions with conditions, withheld degrees and expulsions) are communicated to a student's parents or legal guardians. Parents may be notified when a student has been found responsible for a violation which, if repeated, could lead to a separation. While the University will not generally reach out to parents/guardians in advance of a hearing, we urge students to take that initiative and be open with their parents about the fact that they have been charged with a violation and explain the range of potential outcomes.

15. I have been issued a suspension by the Committee on Discipline. When would that suspension be served? If I received a one-semester suspension, when would I return to campus?

A student's suspension normally begins in the semester that the infraction is investigated and adjudicated. For example, if an infraction occurs and is adjudicated during the fall semester, the student's suspension begins that fall semester, the spring semester would be a leave of absence and the student returns as an enrolled student the following fall semester. However, if a student's case is adjudicated (heard by the Committee) during the last week of classes, the student is normally given the option of either: 1) finishing the semester (receiving credit and grades for all the courses in the current semester) and serving the suspension in the following semester; or 2) applying the suspension to the current semester, in which case the student would not receive any credit or grades for classes taken during that semester. If your case is adjudicated after Dean's Date in a given semester, then you must finish the semester and your course grades for the semester will appear on your transcript.

If you are suspended for one semester during the fall semester and your suspension will apply to the fall semester, the spring semester will be a leave of absence and you will be eligible for reinstatement the fall of the following academic year. If you are suspended for one semester during the last week of classes of the fall semester and you choose to finish the fall semester, then your suspension will apply to the spring semester, the following fall semester will be a leave of absence and you will be eligible to return the spring semester of the following academic year.

If you receive a one-semester suspension, then the term following your suspension will be recorded on your transcript as a leave of absence. For more information about policies governing leaves of absence, see the Undergraduate Announcement: <https://ua.princeton.edu/contents/academic-standing-leaves-of-absence-and-reinstatement>

Students who receive suspensions are automatically eligible for reinstatement following their separation, unless specific conditions are attached to their return (e.g. restitution for property damage, return of stolen property, etc.).

16. What is my right of appeal for a decision by the COD?

If you are found responsible for one or more **academic integrity violations**, you may appeal to the dean of the college on the grounds that (1) there exists substantial relevant information that was not presented, and reasonably could not have been presented, to the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline, or (2) the imposed penalty does not fall within the range of penalties imposed for similar misconduct. A student found responsible for an academic integrity violation may also file a procedural appeal with the Judicial Committee of the Council of the Princeton University Community (CPUC).

If you are found responsible for one or more **non-academic violations**, you may appeal the decision to an appellate body comprising three of the following five people: the dean of the

College, the Vice President of Campus Life, the dean of the Graduate School, the chairman of the Judicial Committee of the CPUC, and one other member of the faculty appointed by the President. You may appeal on one or more of the following grounds: (1) the procedures were not fair and reasonable; (2) substantial relevant information has emerged that was not presented, and reasonably could not have been presented to the COD; (3) the imposed penalty does not fall within the range of penalties imposed for similar misconduct.

Note that “the purpose of an appeal is not to initiate a review of substantive issues of fact or a new determination of whether a violation of University rules has occurred” (*RRR 2.5.2*).

The deadline for filing an appeal in a behavioral case is one week from the date of decision by the COD. All appeals are coordinated by Christine Gage in One Nassau Hall (cgage@princeton.edu or 258-3151).

Please note that if your appeal is still pending as the end of the semester approaches, you will want to consult your residential college dean to discuss your options.

17. What resources are available to me before, during, or after the disciplinary process?

The residential college staff and the secretary of the COD will be happy to discuss resources and accommodations that may be of use to you. You are strongly advised to seek confidential counseling, for example, by visiting Counseling and Psychological Services, University Health Services, or the chaplains in the Office of Religious Life. You may also consult your residential college staff about other accommodations that may be available, including housing and/or academic accommodations. You may inquire about the possibility of a Dean’s No-Contact Order (DNCO), a non-disciplinary, administrative measure which may be relevant in non-academic cases.

18. What accommodations are available to me in the disciplinary process if I have a disability?

Students with a disability may obtain information regarding resources that may be available by contacting Elizabeth Erickson, Director for Disability Services ((609) 258-8840 or eerickso@princeton.edu).

19. If I feel my Title IX rights have been violated in connection with the disciplinary process, what should I do?

You may file a Title IX grievance with the Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity.