

Academic Standards Procedures

2026-2027

Scope of Authority:

The Academic Standards Policy states George Mason University's standards for academic integrity and the process for adjudicating claims that an individual has violated those standards. The Academic Standards Office facilitates the process by which claims that an individual has violated the Academic Standards Policy are adjudicated in accordance with this document. The expectations regarding academic standards apply to all individuals at Mason who engage in academic or research-related activities. Referrals received after a student's degree has been conferred may result in degree revocation.

George Mason University has an office to address issues related to research misconduct. Those incidents are investigated through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance. For more information, see [University Policy 4007](#) or contact the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance via their website at [Office of Research Integrity and Assurance](#).

Involved Parties Responsibilities During the Referral Process:

Students and Faculty

Students and faculty must abide by the [Academic Standards Policy](#). Students must represent themselves during academic standards investigations; another party may not speak on their behalf. Exceptions are made for sign language interpreters and any accommodations provided by the Office of Disability Services. Regardless of any accommodations or interpreters, the referred student must represent themselves in the case resolution process themselves in the case resolution process

Witness

Referred students may submit witness statements about the case as supporting documentation in cases of administrative or written reviews. Witness statements must be sent directly from the witness to the Academic Standards Office email account (asos@gmu.edu). Character witnesses will not be accepted or considered when determining responsibility or sanction(s). Upon receipt of the witness statements, the Academic Standards Office will distribute the statements to the referred student and referring party. Referring parties may include witness statements in their referrals related to administrative hearings and written reviews. All witnesses related to live hearings from either party must appear during the live hearing; statements will not be accepted on their behalf.

Advisor

A referred student may have one (1) advisor present during any meeting or hearing related to the Academic Standards process, provided the student has submitted the appropriate Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (F.E.R.P.A.) waivers that name the additional party. The advisor does not represent or speak on the student's behalf and cannot address the Committee or hearing officer. The advisor can communicate with the student through the process if such presence is not disruptive to the hearing and does not unreasonably lengthen the hearing. If the advisor violates the rules and procedures for proceedings, such action will result in the immediate removal of the advisor from the current and any future proceedings.

Review Entities

Academic Standards Committee Membership

Limited to Mason faculty, staff, and students. Student members must:

- Be in good academic and conduct standing
- Complete all required training modules and an Annual Behavioral Agreement
- Undergraduate student members must maintain a minimum cumulative G.P.A. of 2.75
- Graduate student members must maintain a minimum cumulative G.P.A. of 3.00.

Faculty members, administrative faculty members, and classified staff members must:

- Have at least a master's degree from an accredited program or comparable professional experience.
- Have at least 1 semester of teaching experience at the collegiate level or comparable professional experience.
- Complete all required training modules and an Annual Behavioral Agreement.
- Recuse themselves from resolving cases they refer as instructors.
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The Academic Standards Committee

The Committee reviews all submitted case information and determines the outcome regarding the student's alleged violation using a clear and convincing standard. Each Panel consists of three (3) Academic Standards Committee Members selected by the Office of Academic Standards. The three individuals must not have any conflicts of interest. Any party may notify the Academic Standards Office if they believe a Panel member in their case has a conflict of interest. The Academic Standards Office will evaluate the claim and determine whether to replace the member.

In cases where a graduate student has been referred, at least one member of the Panel must be either a graduate student, a classified staff member, an administrative faculty member, or a faculty member.

If a full Panel cannot be created for a hearing, students have the option of proceeding with the hearing with only two (2) Panel members by signing a waiver with the understanding that the decision of such a panel would have to be unanimous for the student to be found in violation. If a student chooses to proceed with their hearing with two (2) members, they waive the opportunity to appeal based on the number of panel members reviewing their case.

Administrative Hearing Officer

The administrative hearing officer is a staff member in the Academic Standards Office or designee assigned to review a case and determine the outcome using the clear and

convincing evidence standard.

Appeal Panel

The Appeal Panel reviews a referred party's submitted appeal and determines if the referred party has met the chosen grounds for appeal and provided evidence to substantiate those grounds. They receive the referred party's written appeal documents, information from the Academic Standards Office (as needed), and the material submitted in the original case adjudication to determine the appeal outcome. The Appeal Panel consists of three (3) Academic Standards Committee members who did not review the student's initial case. A representative from the Academic Standards Office is also present to provide procedural information but does not have decision-making authority for the appeal.

Process Outline:

Referral Notice

When a report is submitted that alleges an individual violated Academic Standards, the Academic Standards Office staff will review the referral and determine, based on the information provided, number of offenses, and university sanctioning matrix, the appropriate level designation for the referral. From there, corresponding sanctions based on that level designation will be assigned if the student is found in violation. These sanctions will be included in the student's referral notice. If a student is referred multiple times in the same class, this will elevate the level designation. The referred party will receive a referral notice to their Mason email address. Referred parties can access all submitted information related to their case by following the directions in their referral notice.

Information included in the referral notice:

- A link to the full Academic Standards policy
- A link to the full Academic Standards Process
- Alleged violation(s)
- The level of the alleged violation and the corresponding recommended sanctions
- The semester in which the alleged violation took place.
- Instructions for scheduling a pre-hearing meeting with staff
- Link to the Guardian Software System where student can find the following:
 - The Academic Standards Prehearing Resolution form
 - Case files submitted by the referring party in the case

In cases where retaliation is a legitimate safety concern, or where the information submitted is sensitive, case files may be redacted or presented in a way designed to prevent identification or circulation of sensitive information.

Prehearing Meeting

During this meeting, students will review their resolution options and case material provided by the referring party and decide how they wish to proceed. A pre-hearing is optional for students who are not facing suspension or permanent dismissal. Students facing suspension or permanent dismissal are required to schedule a pre-hearing

meeting with a staff member within seven (7) calendar days of the date of the referral notice.

Students who fail to schedule and/or attend a required pre-hearing will have a hold placed on their student account that will remain until they complete their required pre-hearing or until their case is resolved via a scheduled hearing.

Academic Standards Prehearing Resolution Form

The Academic Standards Prehearing Resolution Form is sent alongside the referral notice for students not facing suspension or permanent dismissal and must be completed by the date and time listed in the referral notice. Students facing suspension or permanent dismissal will receive their prehearing resolution form after completing the required prehearing meeting.

If a student does not submit their prehearing resolution form by the deadline listed in their notice, the case will be forwarded for review in absentia. Information on this form includes:

- Plea Type:
 - In Violation
 - Not in Violation
- Explanation of Review Options:
 - Administrative Hearing Officer Review
 - Academic Standards Panel Review

If a student does not understand any aspect of their case, they are encouraged to schedule a Prehearing Meeting with a staff member from the Academic Standards Office before completing the form. Please note based on calendar availability, this meeting may take place after the deadline. Students should notify the Office of Academic Standards that they have scheduled a meeting beyond the deadline date.

Review Proceedings

Plea Types

If a student enters a plea of 'in violation,' the recommended sanctions will be assigned and there is no opportunity to appeal.

If a student enters a plea of 'not in violation,' the case will be reviewed by an Academic Standards Panel or by an Administrative Hearing Officer.

Review Types

- Administrative Hearing Officer Reviews are only for students who have been alleged to have committed a Level 1 violation and are not facing suspension, or permanent dismissal. The Administrative Hearing Officer Review is conducted by a member of the Office of Academic Standards or designee.
- Written Review is only for students who have been alleged to have committed a Level 2 violation and are not facing suspension or permanent dismissal. The written review is conducted by an Academic Standards Panel.
- Live Academic Standards Panel Hearings are only for students facing suspension or permanent dismissal.

The Academic Standards Office cannot compel any party to be present during the Administrative Officer Review or Hearing. If a party does not attend the review or hearing, the decision on the case will be rendered in their absence. The decision on the case will be rendered via email within five (5) business days of the scheduled conference, unless more time is deemed necessary.

Administrative Hearing Officer Review

The referred student(s) and referring party do not appear in-person before an Administrative Hearing Officer. All documents and statements shared by the referred student(s) will be provided to the referring party, and all documents and statements shared by the referring party will be provided to the referred student(s). Only documents received by the applicable deadlines will be shared, and failure to submit by those deadlines will result in the officer determining an outcome based solely on the information available at the time of review. Referred students must submit the documentation using the forms provided by the Office of Academic Standards and other submissions (such as an incident reporting form to submit a statement) will not be accepted.

The process for the parties to provide information for an Administrative Hearing Officer Review is as follows:

- Within seven (7) calendar days of receiving notice that their Pre-Hearing Resolution form has been processed, the referred student(s) may submit a written statement and any documentation they feel supports their case.
 - Failure to submit a written statement by the deadline will result in the case being moved to the officer in absentia.
- Within four(4) calendar days of the referring party receiving the referred student(s) statements and documents, the referring party may submit a written response and provide any additional supporting documentation.
- Within four (4) calendar days of the referred student(s) receiving the referring party's final response, the referred student(s) may submit a reply, including any rebuttal documents or witness statements.

The Administrative Hearing Officer assigned to the case will then review the materials submitted. The Administrative Hearing Officer may reach out to either party if additional information or questioning would be helpful in making a determination.

The hearing officer will make a determination of either 'In Violation' or 'Not in Violation' using the clear and convincing standard. Referred student(s) are found in violation if clear and convincing information of a violation based on the facts presented is present. If the referred student(s) is found in violation, the officer will assign the grade-related and educational sanctions as indicated on the sanctioning matrix. If the referred student(s) is found not in violation, no sanctions are assigned, and the professor will be instructed to grade the assignment accordingly.

Written Review

The student and faculty member do not appear in-person before an Academic Standards Panel. All documents and statements shared by the referred party will be provided to the referring party, and all documents and statements shared by the referring party will be provided to the referred party. Only documents received by the applicable deadlines will

be shared, and failure to submit by those deadlines will result in the Panel deciding based solely on the information available at the time of review.

The process for the parties to provide information for a Written Review is as follows:

- Within seven (7) calendar days of receiving notice that their Pre-Hearing Resolution form has been processed, the referred party may submit a written statement and any documentation they feel supports their case.
- Within four (4) calendar days of the referring party receiving the referred party's statements and documents, the referring party may submit a written response and provide any additional supporting documentation.
- Within four(4) calendar days of the referred party receiving the referring party's final response, the referred party may submit a reply, including any rebuttal documents or witness statements.

The Academic Standards Panel assigned to the case will then review the materials submitted.

If the Panel can make a determination based on the written materials, it will make a determination of either 'In Violation' or 'Not in Violation'. Referred parties are found in violation if two of the three Panel members find clear and convincing information of a violation based on the facts presented. If the referred party is found in violation, the Panel will assign the grade-related and educational sanctions as indicated on the sanctioning matrix. If the referred party is found not in violation, no sanctions are assigned, and the professor will be instructed to grade the assignment accordingly.

Academic Standards Panel Hearing

The referred party, referring faculty member, and any advisors or witnesses appear live via videoconference before an Academic Standards Panel. During the Hearing, both parties will present all the information to be considered by the Panel when determining an outcome for the case. The Academic Standards Office will schedule a Hearing and email the referred party and referring party a notice with the date, time, and link for the hearing. Only academic schedules are considered when scheduling Hearings. If the referred party has extenuating circumstances that interfere with the scheduled meeting time, they must reach out to the Academic Standards Office to request a reschedule.

Voluntary commitments will not result in a hearing being rescheduled. The Office will decide whether the request to reschedule will be granted. The hearing will be scheduled at least seven (7) calendar days from the date of the notice, and the date/time will not be changed once set, absent an emergency.

The process for the parties to provide information for an Academic Standards Panel Hearing is as follows:

- No later than seven (7) calendar days before the scheduled hearing, both parties must submit all documents and witness statements they wish to present at the hearing to the Academic Standards Office, which will share the materials with the other party.
- If the referred party plans to bring an advisor, they must submit the name of

the advisor that will accompany them at the hearing no later than 24 hours in advance of the hearing

- No later than two (2) business days before the hearing both parties may submit rebuttal documents and/or names of any rebuttal witnesses along with statements from the rebuttal witnesses. A rebuttal document or witness must provide information that responds to or refutes information contained in a previously submitted document or witness statement. A party offering rebuttal submission must explain what the document or witness will rebut. Witness statements must be sent directly by the witness to the Office of Academic Standards at asos@gmu.edu and include the case number in the subject line.
- At the hearing, the referring and referred party are each allotted up to fifteen (15) minutes to make an opening statement. After this, there is questioning of the referring party by the Panel and the referred student. Then there is questioning of the referred student by the Panel and the referring party.
- Following the questioning of the parties, any witnesses will be questioned. Witnesses will not offer a statement during hearings, but witnesses must be present at the hearing so that other parties and the Panel may ask questions. Should a witness not attend a hearing, the Panel cannot consider the witness's statement.
- Subject to the requirements of the preceding paragraph, if the Panel determines a witness' statement contains relevant information, the Panel shall consider the witness statement as the witness' testimony. The Panel may decide not to accept witness testimony or additional evidence if it determines that a witness's testimony or additional evidence is not relevant.
- After any witness questioning, the referring and referred party shall have up to ten (10) minutes each to make a closing statement.

The Academic Standards Panel will consider the information provided at the hearing and make a decision as to responsibility for the alleged violations. Referred parties are found in violation if two of the three Panel members find clear and convincing information of a violation based on the facts presented. If the referred party is found in violation, the Panel will use the institutional sanctioning matrix to assign the grade-related and educational sanctions as indicated. If the referred party is found not in violation, no sanctions are assigned, and the professor will be instructed to grade the assignment accordingly.

Notification of Parties

Following the decision of the Administrative Hearing Officer or Academic Standards Panel, the Academic Standards Office will send a decision letter via Mason email to the referred party and referring party notifying them of the decision and the sanctions to be imposed, as applicable.

Appeals

Only the referred student may appeal. The appeal process has two parts. Part one involves logging in to the case and submitting the appeal. Part two involves completing a form that the referred student receives after completing part one. Both parts must be

submitted in writing within seven (7) calendar days of the date of the decision letter. The decision letter will list the deadline and process for the appeal. All appeal requests must be submitted according to the procedures outlined in the decision letter. No statement exchange occurs during an appeal; thus, the referred student must include all information they would like reviewed in their appeal during the initial submission of appeal documentation. Appeals are not available to students who plead in violation and accept responsibility through the pre-hearing resolution process.

Referred parties can appeal the decision of the Panel based on one or more of the following grounds(s):

- New Information Not Reasonably Available at the Time of the Original Hearing
 - This does not include an individual failing to submit a pre-hearing form, failing to attend or failing to provide a statement for their case who wants to present evidence they would have presented had they appeared or participated in the case resolution process.
- Substantive Error or Procedural Irregularity
 - This is an allegation that the Academic Standards process was not adhered to, the result of which had a material effect on the outcome, not an allegation of a violation of academic department policy. It is also not an allegation that the referring party did not notify the student ahead of submitting a referral.
- Severity of Sanction
 - Available only if permanent dismissal is assigned as a sanction outcome. This appeal ground is unavailable if a student is academically dismissed or terminated from Mason due to a grade-related outcome of an Academic Standards case.
- Level of Violation
 - The student may appeal if they believe the level assignment in their case was not appropriately applied based on level definitions in the policy (ie. the student believes the level assignment should be lower than it was)
 - The student must provide an explanation and supporting documentation proving that a different level should have been assigned.

Upon submission, appeals will be reviewed by a representative in the Academic Standards Office. Appeals submitted with an incomplete form, appeals that do not meet the outlined criteria for an appeal, or do not follow the instructions stated in the outcome letter will not be accepted or reviewed by an Appeal Panel. A referred party may resubmit the appeal if they can correct the errors (including appeal grounds) within the appeal's original deadline window. The Appeal Panel will determine if the referred student has met the grounds for appeal and has provided evidence to substantiate those grounds. The Appeal Panel may do one of the following:

- Remand the case for a new hearing with guidance for the new committee to consider;
- Modify the findings/outcome
- Affirm the original decision;
 - A decision to affirm the original decision is final and no further appeals shall be permitted.

Once this appeal is complete, the process is finished. There are no additional levels of appeal, and grade sanctions that result from this process cannot be overturned by an academic grade appeal.

APPENDIX-REFERRALS FROM PARTIES NOT AFFILIATED WITH GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Occasionally, the Office of Academic Standards receives claims from individuals who are not faculty or students at George Mason alleging that a student violated the Academic Standards Policy and offering to provide evidence supporting those claims (e.g.: proof of payment for services). In these cases, the following procedures will be followed:

- Referral from outside party is received.
- Outside party is instructed to submit the referral via the Guardian portal.
- Designated OAS staff checks Banner to ensure that the student being accused is enrolled in the courses implicated.
- Designated OAS staff reaches out to the faculty member for implicated courses to get more information such as whether the alleged assignments were part of that course, whether those assignments were submitted for credit, etc. If the faculty member does not respond, or is no longer employed at Mason, OAS will contact the department chair for the above information and then render a decision whether to proceed with an OAS referral.
- If the referring party states that the student's log in information was provided, point person reaches out to Canvas Admins and/or ITS to investigate whether a violation of the IT Security Policy occurred. If external individuals were given access to Mason systems, the designated OAS staff also submits a Student Conduct incident report (responsible use of computing violation).
- If the evidence suggests it is warranted, designated OAS staff will gather evidence, write a summary of the case, and submit the OAS referral.