



Guidelines to policy 71 process within the Faculty of Engineering (student's perspective)

This document has been prepared to assist engineering students receiving an allegation letter from the Associate Dean Undergraduate Studies or Director of Academic Integrity. It describes the process that is followed and where you are in that process. It is intended to help you see the next steps to take.

Whenever the Associate Dean/Director of Academic Integrity is presented with an allegation of a potential violation of policy 71 by a student, an allegation letter (similar to the one that you have received) is sent to the student. The letter includes the following information:

- An indication of the potential offence,
- An indication of which part(s) of the policy that may have been violated,
- A list of the current evidence,
- A request for a response letter from the student within the policy 71 timelines (typically five working days),
- A suggestion that the student may wish to book an appointment to meet with the Associate Dean's delegate to discuss the matter further.

Some of these items require further explanation:

Potential offence: At the time the allegation letter is prepared, the actual offence (if any) may not be known. As a result, this part of the letter is an estimate of the offence. (For example: what appears to be plagiarism, may actually be copying once the investigation is completed).

Current evidence: Prior to sending the allegation letter, the Associate Dean's delegate does not review the evidence in detail but rather reviews the evidence to determine what had been presented (to date). Please note that we are not permitted to name anyone else involved in your case.

Response letter: The response letter is the opportunity for the student to provide their view of the evidence and events surrounding the evidence. It may be (and often is) an admission that they did commit the offence described (and there may be some mitigating circumstances). It also may be that some critical piece of evidence has not yet been provided (and the student either provides the evidence in their response letter, or alternatively indicates who may be in possession of information or evidence important to the case). Or it may be that the student wishes to refute some part of the evidence. In fact, the response letter provides the Associate Dean/Director of Academic Integrity with information that the student believes must be considered when determining guilt or innocence in this matter. The following pages contain information on response letter content for some (but not all) common situations.

Please note: The response letter, while it can be informal, must be signed and dated by the student.

Timelines: Policy 71 specifies a number of timelines, many of which are difficult for all of us to meet. In the case of Engineering, the five-day response letter timeline is interpreted as: the student has five days to provide the written response letter as specified in the letter. If more time is required, please contact the Engineering Undergraduate Office. See contact information below.

Meeting with the Associate Dean/Director of Academic Integrity or the Associate Dean's delegate:

Although not required, many students feel they wish to meet with the Associate Dean/Director of Academic Integrity or his delegate prior to submitting the response letter. If you wish to set up a meeting (which may be via MS Teams), please contact the Engineering Undergraduate Office. See contact information below. This meeting is an opportunity to discuss the elements which should be included in the response letter or if the student has questions about the process. The student may request a revised due date for the response letter provided there is a good reason, and the deadline is agreed upon by both parties (usually within 5 days of the meeting/phone conversation).

Suggestions for response letters involving allegations of copying and/or plagiarism.

The letter should start with a clear statement as to what happened and then go on to include the information described below.

Cases associated with allegations of these offences are often fairly similar, and as a result there are a number of specific points that you should address in your response. There are three general cases (excluding the case of an admission of responsibility and acceptance of the offence) that are summarized below. Often by including answers to the questions below, as well as any other information that you feel is important to the case, there will be no need for a meeting with the Associate Dean/Director of Academic Integrity or their delegate.

Information was knowingly shared between students.

If you are seeking to explain a situation that you provided information to another student (or alternatively that you received information from another student), then the points that need to be addressed include the following.

- Were specific guidelines provided by the course material or by the course instructor? If so, explain the relationship between what you did and what is permitted in the course.
- **(As the source of the material)** If you provided material to another student, what form was the material (oral paper, electronic [email discussion or text, or copy of your own answer for example])? Who did you provide the information to or was it provided to a large group? Assuming that you knew that the other person had a copy of your material, how did you instruct the person to use the material...if at all?
- **(As the user of the material)** If you used material provided by another student, what form was the material (oral, paper, electronic [email discussion or copy of your own answer for example])? Assuming that the other person knew that you had a copy of your material, what terms and conditions did you understand were to be applied to the material (how were you allowed or expected to use the material...if at all?).

There was an information exchange.

In this case, you are seeking to explain collaboration and to demonstrate that the collaboration did not become excessive collaboration. The points that you need to address include the following.

- Were there specific collaboration guidelines provided by the course material or by the course instructor? If so, explain the relationship between what you did and what is permitted in the course, if not, explain the level of collaboration that you believed to be acceptable.
- Name your collaboration partners.
- How did the collaboration occur (telephone, email, paper)?
- How much information did you provide? How much information did you receive?
- Help the Associate Dean/Director of Academic Integrity understand which part of your answer is yours and which part is the other student's or students'.
- If the course provided a space to explain collaboration, did you? If not, why not? If there was no specific space to acknowledge collaboration, and you did not cite your source why did you not cite your source?

You were the sole author and neither provided nor received information from another student.

If you are seeking to assert that you are the sole author of the material and that you neither had access to others' answers (or information that was close to their answer(s)) for the questions nor knowingly provided your answer(s) (or information that was close to your answer(s)) to others, then you need to help the Associate Dean/Director of Academic Integrity understand how your material may have been used by another student. Questions that you should address include the ones listed below.

- What was the environment where you prepared your answer (e.g. my own laptop, my UWaterloo account in an open lab, a desktop I share with others in my house)?
- Who else had access to your computer (if there was a computer) or who else had access to your desk (if you answered the question on paper at a desk)?
- Were other students involved in your answer (My friend XXX handed the paper in for me)?
- Did you discuss the assignment with other students? If so, how detailed was the discussion; what was the format of the discussion (electronic or oral); and who were the other students?
- Do you keep your laptop with you at all times?
- On the computer used, do you subscribe to one of the peer-to-peer sharing sites? If so, which one or ones?

If you have questions regarding the process or what should be included in your response letter, please email engineering.integrity@uwaterloo.ca.