



Running Successful Disciplinary Conferences

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- Located in the northwest suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia.
- Established in 1963 as Kennesaw Junior College with enrollment of 1,014 students.
- Grew into a four year college and then university, with enrollment now at 25,000+ students.
- The Student Code of Conduct is a modified honor code enforced by the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity department (SCAI), encompassing academic misconduct, general misconduct, and residential misconduct.

Academic Misconduct Preamble

II. Academic Honesty

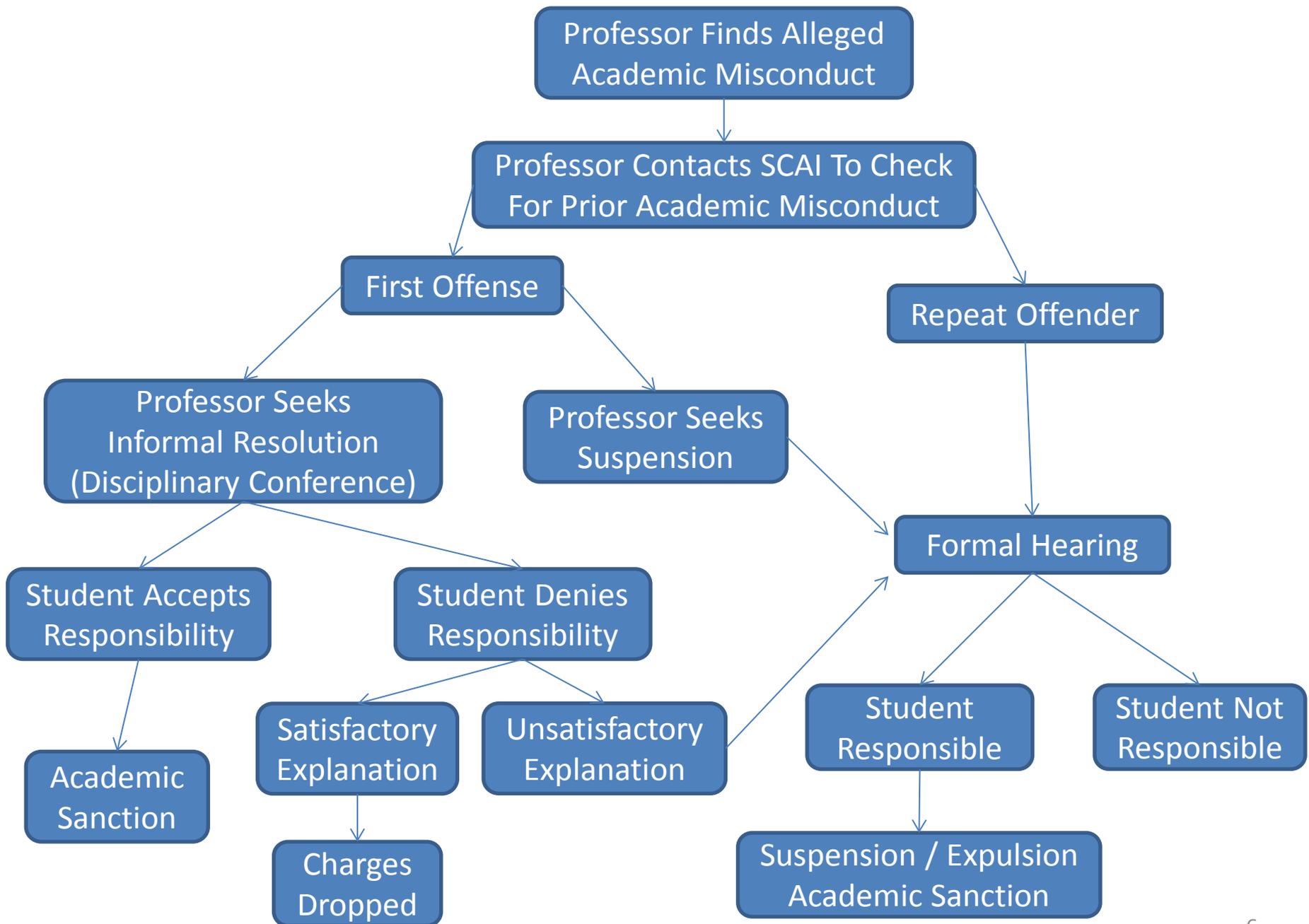
The high quality of education at Kennesaw State University is reflected in the credits and degrees its students earn. The protection of high standards of academic integrity is crucial since the validity and equity of the University's grades and degrees depend upon it. **Any student found to have violated any KSU academic honesty regulation after a hearing before a university hearing panel or before a hearing officer shall be suspended for at least one semester, unless the student persuades the deciding body or hearing officer that the circumstances of his or her behavior substantially mitigate the gravity of the violation.** These regulations are designed to assist students in (1) developing appropriate attitudes about, and (2) understanding and following the university's standards relating to academic honesty. The regulations protect students by helping them avoid committing infractions that may compromise the completion of their KSU degrees or damage their reputations.

Cheating Policy

- “No student shall receive, attempt to receive, knowingly give or attempt to give unauthorized assistance in the preparation of any work required to be submitted for credit (including examinations, laboratory reports, essays, themes, term papers, etc.).”
- “Unless specifically authorized, the presence and/or use of electronic devices during an examination, quiz, or other class assignment is considered cheating.”
- “Engaging in any behavior which a professor prohibits as academic misconduct in the syllabus or in class discussion is cheating.”

Plagiarism & Self-Plagiarism Policy

- “When direct quotations are used, they should be indicated, and when the ideas, theories, data, figures, graphs, programs, electronic based information or illustrations of someone other than the student are incorporated into a paper or used in a project, they should be duly acknowledged.”
- “No student may submit the same, or substantially the same, paper or other assignment for credit in more than one class without the prior permission of the current professor(s).”



Before Disciplinary Conference

- The professor and facilitator select the time, date, and location of the meeting, making sure not to conflict with the student's class schedule.
- The professor notifies the accused student of the scheduled meeting. It is not necessary to explain that the meeting is related to academic misconduct, although professors may do so.
- The professor gathers all available evidence ahead of the conference.

Disciplinary Conference Steps

1. All parties introduce themselves.
2. Facilitator briefly explains the disciplinary conference model, including the three possible outcomes (academic sanction[s], dropped charges, or formal hearing).
3. Professor explains the specific charge and shows evidence of misconduct.

Disciplinary Conference Steps

4. Both the professor and facilitator ask the student questions to understand what happened.
5. The accused student has a chance to explain her side of the story (and perhaps apologize).
6. The professor and facilitator discuss the ethical issues associated with the allegation (especially how these issues apply in the “real world” beyond college).

Disciplinary Conference Resolution

If the accused admits responsibility for the alleged offense:

1. The professor chooses an academic sanction (grade penalty for assignment, grade penalty for course, re-do assignment, new assignment, or combination thereof).
2. The professor documents the violation and resolution with an Academic Misconduct Incident Form signed by both parties and sends this document to SCAI.

Disciplinary Conference Resolution

If the accused denies responsibility for the alleged offense—

- —and the professor accepts the explanation, the conference ends with all charges dropped.
- —and the professor still believes that a violation took place, the conference ends. The professor alone signs the Academic Misconduct Incident Form and sends it to SCAI with all evidence to initiate a formal hearing.

Choosing the Right Sanction

- Assigning a grade penalty is relatively easy. The most common sanction assigned by KSU faculty is a “0” for the assignment, or a final grade penalty of some kind if a “0” would not meaningfully impact the student’s grade.
- The more advanced the course, the stricter any grade penalties should be. It is reasonable to expect more from seniors than freshmen, and still more from graduate students. Some majors are stricter.

Choosing the Right Sanction

- Assigning new work (or requiring a re-do) also means more work for the professor. Reserve these sanctions for clear learning opportunities and unintentional (but still actionable) offenses.
- Don't take a cookie cutter approach. Look at all mitigating and exacerbating factors and compare the current case to similar violations. Let precedent inform rather than dictate.

Choosing the Right Sanction

- Balance mercy and justice. Sanctions should be fair to the accused student's classmates who did the right thing, but everyone makes mistakes. Aim to be developmental, not punitive.
- Reward cooperation and remorse. The more a student works with the process and owns up to her mistakes, the lighter the sanction needs to be.

Choosing the Right Sanction

- Beware of proscribed sanctions in a course syllabus (e.g. “If you cheat in my class, I will fail you for the course.”). Such statements can deter offenses, but limit options when the professor wishes to be more lenient (or harsher).
- Reward cooperation and remorse. The more a student works with the process and owns up to her mistakes, the lighter the sanction needs to be.

Unintentional Violations

- First semester freshmen probably deserve a bit of slack at the start of the term, particularly as they may not understand what constitutes plagiarism. Treat early mistakes as learning experiences and warnings, rather than lingering black marks on their record.
- It does not matter whether a student knows the rules. It only matters whether she has had a *reasonable opportunity* to learn the rules.

International Students

- These students may not be familiar with academic integrity standards. This doesn't excuse misconduct, but professors should be as clear as possible when giving instructions and elicit feedback that shows understanding.
- Some cultures take a collectivist approach to knowledge in which data belongs to the culture as a whole rather than the discoverer. For such students, the very notion of plagiarism can be baffling and require additional effort to explain.

International Students

- In some cultures, it is considered highly disrespectful to change the words of an expert rather than quote her verbatim. Such students typically have great difficulty with paraphrasing.
- In other cultures, students have a deeply entrenched “us vs. them” animosity toward faculty that normalizes collaborative cheating among students.

International Students

- Foreign students with a student visa have much more to fear from suspension. Don't let them rush into signing a form and take responsibility out of fear without clear evidence of a violation.
- Accommodate and care, but don't lower standards. International students chose to leave their home country and study abroad. That means they have a duty to understand the expectations of their chosen institution.

Variations and Variables

- The accused student may be prompted to talk first (i.e. “Why do you think I’ve called you in here?”).
- If the student’s answers and explanation reveals problems that campus resources can help with (like the counseling office, writing center, etc.), pause to explain those resources and provide contact information. Doing this may prevent future misconduct.

Variations and Variables

- If the student is persistently hostile and/or uncooperative, the facilitator should end the conference and take the case back to SCAI for a formal hearing.
- If the professor or facilitator anticipates a dangerous or even violent reaction, a disciplinary conference is probably not appropriate. If parties wish to go ahead, they should arrange for campus police/security to be nearby.

Variations and Variables

- “I didn’t do it, but I can’t risk getting suspended!” is **not** taking responsibility. Informal resolution via disciplinary conference is reserved for those who admit wrongdoing.
- Ask a student who has admitted misconduct to step outside and come up with a suggested sanction. Even if the professor already has a plan, the student may have a better idea. This also allows the facilitator and professor to brainstorm and discuss precedents.

Good Cop, Good Cop

- A disciplinary conference is *not* an interrogation. It is a chance for a wrongdoer to take responsibility for her actions. No one should be out to “get them” for their offense. The goal is rehabilitation and better decisions in future.
- Facilitators should be multipartial advocates, not impartial mediators. This means helping the faculty accuser through the process, while also trying to get the best possible outcome for the accused. Both sides deserve compassion and aid.

This Is Personal

- Accusing a student of academic misconduct can prompt anger, fear, and other strong emotions.
- Have a tissue box handy so the disciplinary conference isn't interrupted by the accused leaving to compose himself. Many students cry.
- The professor likely also feels strong feelings (anger at the betrayal of trust, sadness, disappointment, etc.). Part of the facilitator's job is to be a level-headed voice of reason.

Parents, Partners, Lawyers, Etc.

- **Option #1:** Don't. The accused student is an adult and should face the consequences of her actions.
- **Option #2:** Provided the accused student signs a FERPA waiver, her parent(s), spouse, attorney, or other important party may be present, but cannot participate in any way.
- **Option #3:** As per option 2 above, but the guest may also ask questions.
- ***This is a privilege, not a right.*** Eject guests who are belligerent or interfere with the proceedings.

No-Shows

If a student fails to attend a scheduled disciplinary conference, the professor has several options:

1. Reschedule. This is the nicest option, but probably shouldn't be done more than once.
2. Schedule a formal hearing, but allow the accused to come to the SCAI office any time prior to the hearing and sign the form accepting the sanction chosen by the professor.
3. Schedule a formal hearing.

Other Tips and Tricks

- Consistently demonstrate empathy. Students often feel that hearing officers don't understand their challenges, especially if a notable age difference exists. Consider sharing relevant personal anecdotes.
- Break the violation down into a series of smaller decisions, showing each point at which the student could have chosen a better path (and hopefully will in future).

Other Tips and Tricks

- Let students save face. Once they have admitted to any academic misconduct, resolution is possible. It isn't usually necessary to press the point and try to force confession of greater/additional violations.
- Insisting that an accused student reveal other offenders to informally resolve his case can crack a cheating ring, but this can feel like blackmail and will likely result in lingering resentment.

Other Tips and Tricks

- Meeting in a professor's office often feels less formal (and thus less scary) for many students. This should factor into deciding an appropriate venue for the disciplinary conference.
- Don't forget FERPA. Professors with a shared office (like many adjuncts) shouldn't use that space for disciplinary conferences unless they can be assured of privacy. Booking a conference room can provide true neutral ground.

Other Tips and Tricks

- Semantics matter. The accused should feel like she made a bad choice, not that she is a bad person. Sending that impression can provoke defensiveness, despair, or even shut down all meaningful participation in the conference.
- Be mindful of body language. Even if the facilitator and professor choose their words carefully, their gestures and facial expressions can send a different (and more judgmental) message.

Other Tips and Tricks

- Try to relate discussion of ethics to the accused student's own life, interests, and intended career path. The more that academic integrity feels relevant (not just collegiate red tape), the more likely the student will internalize intended values.
- Some students will adamantly deny misconduct in the face of overwhelming evidence and accept suspension rather than admit wrongdoing. Don't let such individuals get you down.

Other Tips and Tricks

- Don't schedule a conference without a preponderance of evidence. False allegations destroy mentor-mentee relationship.
- If a paper has a complete works cited and internal citations, but lacks quotation marks, it is likely the plagiarism is a result of poor skill and not deceptive intent. Noting such mitigating details on the Academic Misconduct Form encourages the accused to cooperate.

Other Tips and Tricks

- Word will get around. Students talk among themselves. Be fair and consistent in sanctioning as much as possible for similar violations.
- Prevention is always best. Emphasize academic integrity expectations on day one, but reiterate expectations with each assignment. Without this, students may dismiss the policy as red tape.
- Students who know their professors take academic integrity seriously are less likely to violate the policy.

Reference Links

- **KSU main website:** www.kennesaw.edu
- **SCAI website:** www.kennesaw.edu/scai
- **KSU Student Code of Conduct:**
<https://web.kennesaw.edu/scai/content/ksu-student-code-conduct>
- **Academic Misconduct Incident Form:**
[https://web.kennesaw.edu/scai/sites/web.kennesaw.edu.scai/files/academic misconduct form 0.doc](https://web.kennesaw.edu/scai/sites/web.kennesaw.edu.scai/files/academic%20misconduct%20form%200.doc)
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