
WESTERN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

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WISR's Policy on Academic Honesty and Integrity

Procedures for Maintaining “Authentic Learning and Academic Integrity” at WISR

Part A — Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy

I. Philosophy and Expectations

WISR embraces learning that builds on the knowledge, efforts, and experiences of others and actively encourages students to collaborate with one another and with the larger community. Academic honesty and integrity require that students disclose and make transparent what they have learned from others and how their inquiry has been influenced by others. This includes appropriate citation of the literature used in papers, theses, and dissertations, and acknowledgment of the informal contributions others have made in shaping the student's ideas, questions, and actions.

Nothing in this policy should discourage students from fully collaborating with one another in any aspect of their studies. Such collaboration is encouraged and must be disclosed by the participating students through a written description of the collaboration and each student's contributions. Students should also disclose and acknowledge informal contributions and shared ideas, even where those contributions are not formally written.

II. Identifying Possible Violations

It is the responsibility of WISR faculty to be aware of, and to report on, possible violations. At all stages of identification and review, faculty focus on behaviorally described conduct — specific evidence of what was written or submitted, when, and in what context — rather than general characterizations or assumptions about a student's intentions. WISR's practice of regular faculty-student dialogue and end-of-course oral reviews enables faculty to detect possible inconsistencies. Faculty use the following measures to identify possible violations:

1. Inconsistency between oral and written performance. When a student's performance during an end-of-course oral review or a progress review is (a) inconsistent with the student's language and voice as evidenced in their written assignments, or (b) inconsistent with the quality, depth, and breadth of knowledge demonstrated in their written work.
2. Voice and attribution inconsistencies. When sections of written work do not appear to be in the student's distinctive voice or style, or when citation or attribution of sources is absent or inadequate. This category includes students who may lack experience with paraphrasing, summarizing, and citation practices rather than intentional dishonesty, and such cases present valuable opportunities for instruction and skill development.

III. Informal Response and Support

When a faculty member identifies a potential violation, the first step is ordinarily an informal conversation with the student, during which the faculty member will describe the specific observed inconsistency with reference to concrete examples; clarify WISR's expectations regarding citation, voice, collaboration, and integrity; determine whether the issue reflects an unintentional knowledge gap or an intentional misrepresentation; and connect the student with appropriate resources, such as WISR's designated faculty writing consultant or guidance on citation practices. This informal stage is educational in purpose and is not, by itself, recorded as a formal violation or disciplinary action.

IV. Substantiated Violations

When a faculty member determines that there has been a substantiated violation of academic honesty and integrity — whether intentional or, after supportive intervention,

persistent and unintentional — the response will be guided by the nature and intent of the violation, the student's prior history, and their responsiveness to feedback and instruction. Determinations use the preponderance-of-the-evidence standard (more likely than not that the conduct occurred as described).

Intentional violations

Where a faculty member determines that there has been an intentional violation (for example, knowingly submitting work that is not the student's own, deliberate plagiarism, or intentional failure to cite sources after instruction on proper methods), the work submitted will not be accepted for credit. A second substantiated intentional violation will ordinarily result in dismissal from WISR, subject to the proportionality considerations in Section V and the right of appeal in Part C.

Persistent unintentional violations

Students who commit unintentional violations will receive instruction and assistance from WISR faculty — their main advisor and WISR's designated faculty writing consultant — aimed at teaching appropriate protocols for citing and referencing sources, paraphrasing effectively, and attributing the ideas and contributions of others. If, after documented faculty efforts and a reasonable time for improvement (ordinarily at least one full course cycle), the student persists in committing these types of violations, the work submitted will not be accepted for credit, and continued persistence following intervention will ordinarily result in dismissal from WISR, subject to Section V and Part C.

V. Documentation and Proportionality

When a violation is substantiated, WISR documents the specific behavioral evidence (for example, excerpts of text, source materials, and a timeline); the nature of the violation (intentional versus unintentional, and the specific provision violated); any informal efforts, feedback, or support provided beforehand; the faculty member's findings and reasoning; the decision and its rationale; and the date and format of communication to the student. The student receives written notice of any substantiated violation and resulting academic consequences in a timely manner.

In determining consequences, WISR may consider the nature and severity of the violation, its impact, the student's history, whether the conduct appears intentional or unintentional, and the student's engagement in efforts toward change. Dismissal outcomes described in Section IV are those WISR will ordinarily reach; the decision-maker retains discretion to impose a lesser, proportionate outcome where the circumstances warrant.

VI. WISR's Authentic Learning and Academic Integrity Honor Code and Student Acknowledgment

WISR maintains the Authentic Learning and Academic Integrity Honor Code, which states the affirmative commitments that WISR students and faculty learn, understand, and practice throughout their studies and teaching at WISR. The Honor Code grows directly from WISR's mission of "action-oriented inquiry that combines theory and practice" in a "multicultural learning community": because WISR's personalized, collaborative model depends on genuine inquiry, the Honor Code emphasizes authentic learning — writing and reasoning in one's own voice, being transparent about how and why one reaches conclusions and courses of action, and giving credit to those whose ideas and contributions inform one's work.

Each student, at the beginning of their WISR studies, reads and discusses the "Statement Acknowledging and Committing to WISR's Authentic Learning and Academic Integrity Honor Code" with a WISR faculty member, and then signs it, together with its two accompanying documents — "WISR's Mission — Implications for the WISR Authentic Learning and Academic Integrity Honor Code" and "Procedures for Maintaining Authentic Learning and Academic Integrity at WISR." Within the first month of study, and before

completing the first WISR course, each student also completes the required Honor Code module in the research course for their program: EDD 611: Action-Research for Scholarly, Professional and Societal Contributions in the Doctor of Education in Higher Education and Social Change program; MFT 513: Research Methods in the Master of Science in Psychology, Marriage and Family Therapy program; and MS 511: Action-Research Methods for Educators, Other Professionals and Community Leaders in the Master of Science in Education and Community Leadership program. WISR retains the signed Statement in the student's file.

Through the Honor Code, each student commits to the following principles and practices: writing and conversing in the student's own voice; being transparent about how and why the student reaches conclusions, chooses courses of action, and forms questions in coursework and inquiry; seeking out and creating opportunities to collaborate with others, in seminars, informal discussion, and publicly disclosed collaborative projects, while publicly acknowledging the specific contributions others make to the student's work; learning to avoid inadvertent plagiarism by paraphrasing appropriately and by referencing what the student learns from readings, interviews, and everyday experience; refusing to engage in intentional plagiarism or to assist others, inside or outside WISR, in doing so; and helping others learn and practice the Honor Code.

WISR provides practices that support each student in fulfilling the Honor Code: students use their coursework, action-research labs, and the thesis or dissertation to develop and demonstrate transparency in describing and analyzing their methods of inquiry, including proper referencing and paraphrasing; students use meetings with faculty, including end-of-course oral reviews, to strengthen communication in their own voice; faculty apply rubrics that assess the student's progress in writing and speaking authentically; and students draw on WISR's resources for proper referencing and effective paraphrasing. Through these commitments and practices, each student contributes to and sustains WISR's culture of authentic learning and integrity.

Part B — Student Due Process and Appeals Framework

This framework applies to student-related decisions that significantly affect academic status or participation, including matters arising under the Student Conduct and Collaborative Learning Policy (Part A), the Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy (Part B), Satisfactory Academic Progress, and related areas identified in the Catalog. It is designed to support fair, behaviorally specific, and educational responses consistent with WISR's mission and with the fairness, due-process, and proportionality principles of its institutional accreditor, the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC). Each topical policy specifies the definitions, examples, and context-specific outcomes that apply in its area; this framework supplies the common process.

1. Behavioral Description and Progressive Response

Concerns are described in terms of specific observable behaviors (what was said or done, when, and in what context), not generalized judgments about a student's character or beliefs. Whenever feasible, WISR uses a progressive process:

informal clarification and feedback;

documented advisement or a learning/support plan if concerns persist or are more substantial; and

formal review when concerns are serious, recurring, or significantly affect the learning environment, safety, or academic integrity.

WISR may accelerate this progression when behavior or academic issues pose a substantial risk or disruption.

2. Formal Review: Notice, Opportunity to Respond, and Decision-Making

Written notice

The student receives written notice (usually by email) stating the specific concerns and behaviors at issue, the policies or standards that may apply, the potential range of outcomes, and the next steps in the review process.

Review body

Formal reviews are ordinarily overseen by the Academic Dean; if the Academic Dean is unavailable or directly involved, the Student Services Coordinator, or otherwise the President, will oversee the review — often in consultation with one or more faculty members who do not have a direct conflict of interest with the student. In cases where dismissal or long-term suspension is a potential outcome, a small Conduct Review Panel (for example, the Dean and two faculty members) may be convened, analogous to faculty review bodies used for academic-progress and graduation decisions.

Opportunity to respond

The student has an opportunity to respond in writing, in a meeting (by phone or videoconference), or both, ordinarily within ten (10) business days of the written notice. The student may identify relevant information, context, or documentation for the review body to consider.

Standard of proof and documentation

Decisions are made in good faith using the preponderance-of-the-evidence standard. The decision-maker documents the information considered and the specific behavioral evidence, the key findings of fact, the policy provisions applied, and the reasons for the outcome. The decision and any resulting actions are communicated to the student in writing, and WISR retains appropriate records consistent with FERPA and institutional record-keeping practices.

3. Possible Outcomes

Outcomes are intended to be educational, proportionate, and protective of the learning community. Depending on the policy area, possible outcomes include, but are not limited to:

no violation found, or the concern resolved through clarification;

written warning or advisement outlining expectations and future consequences;

a conduct or learning plan with specific behavioral expectations, timelines, and supports;

modifications to the learning context (for example, seminar participation conditions, practicum changes, or no-contact expectations between specific students);

temporary removal from a course, seminar, practicum site, or other WISR activity when necessary to protect the learning environment or community partners;

probation, suspension, or mandatory leave of absence, including conditions for return; and dismissal from WISR in serious or repeated cases.

In determining outcomes, WISR may consider the nature and severity of the conduct, its impact on others, the student's history, whether the conduct appears intentional or unintentional, and the student's engagement in efforts toward change.

4. Appeals

Students may appeal decisions made under this framework that significantly affect their academic status or participation (for example, dismissal, suspension or mandatory leave, non-acceptance of work for credit, or substantial restrictions on participation).

Grounds for appeal may include a procedural error that materially affected the decision, new information not reasonably available at the time of the original decision, or concerns about the fairness or proportionality of the outcome.

Step 1 — The student submits a written appeal within ten (10) business days of the date of the written decision, stating the grounds for appeal.

Step 2 — Appeals of decisions made by faculty, the Academic Dean, or a Conduct Review Panel are directed first to the President, who reviews the record, the appeal statement, and any relevant additional information, may consult with the faculty member and other relevant parties, and issues a written decision — ordinarily within fifteen (15) business days — that affirms, modifies, or overturns the determination.

Step 3 — If the student wishes to appeal further, they may appeal the President's decision to the Board of Trustees, providing written grounds for the appeal. The Board's decision is final and constitutes WISR's final internal determination.

During the pendency of an appeal, WISR may maintain interim measures (such as a suspension, practicum removal, or non-acceptance of disputed work) when necessary to protect safety, the integrity of the learning environment, or the review process.

5. Relationship to Disability Accommodation and Non-Discrimination

Where concerns may be related to a disability, WISR will inform the student of the available accommodation process and consider reasonable accommodations consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act and applicable California law, while preserving the ability to act promptly where there is a risk or substantial disruption. WISR's Student Services Coordinator, Steven Pomerantz, EdD, serves as WISR's Disabilities Coordinator and is the primary point of contact for accommodation requests through a timely, individualized interactive process. Dr. Karen Wall serves as Associate Disabilities Coordinator (karen.wall@wizr.edu, (909) 583-1545). WISR applies this framework consistently with its Non-Discrimination, Inclusion, and Affirmation of Diversity Values and its Academic Freedom Policy; nothing in this framework alters those commitments.

6. Relationship to Complaint and Grievance Procedures and External Options

This framework governs internal academic and conduct decisions. A student who believes that a decision reflects discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or other unfair treatment may also use WISR's Complaint and Grievance Procedure as set forth in the Catalog, and — for matters within its scope — WISR's Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment Policy. Students retain the right to contact external agencies, including the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) and, where applicable, WISR's institutional accreditor, DEAC.

Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education — 2535 Capitol Oaks Drive, Suite 400, Sacramento, CA 95833 | (888) 370-7589

Complaint form: <https://www.bppe.ca.gov/enforcement/complaint.shtml>

Distance Education Accrediting Commission — 1101 17th Street NW, Suite 808, Washington, DC 20036 | (202) 234-5100