

## **COS Sanctioning Considerations**

For any disciplinary system to be credible, consistency must be a central element. Ideally, over time, precedent should show that similar violations result in similar outcomes. This provides the community a basic understanding of the consequences that result from specific behavior. However, for a disciplinary system to be considered fair, it must be flexible enough to respond to each student as an individual and to the facts and circumstances of each individual case. Sanctions should reflect the institution's desire to educate the student and the community given a particular set of circumstances. Sanctioning decisions at Dartmouth strive to balance consistency of the process with fairness to individual students and a focus on what is educationally appropriate given the facts of each individual case.

If a committee determines that a student is responsible for a violation, it will determine a sanction based on the specific facts of the case, the student's level of intent, information about the student's previous disciplinary history, and the information that follows below about conduct expectations, aggravating and mitigating factors, and outcomes of previous cases. In cases of sexual abuse, physical violence or threatening harm, misappropriation and other misconduct that causes harm to another member of the community, aggravating factors may include whether or not the student responsible was substantially motivated by the victim's race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, disability, or military or veteran status. Unless otherwise noted, the sanctions described below were for first-time offenses.

### **Academic Integrity Summer 2004-Spring 2008**

“Given the fundamental nature of the Academic Honor Principle in an academic community, students should expect to be suspended if they engage in acts of academic dishonesty. Any student who submits work which is not his or her own, or commits other acts of academic dishonesty, violates the purposes of the College and is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or separation. The COS will consider aggravating and mitigating factors, sanctions imposed in other Academic Honor Principle cases, and the student's prior disciplinary history in determining appropriate sanctions in individual cases. If a student is found responsible for violating the Academic Honor Principle, the COS acknowledges that the faculty may reserve the right to fail the student for the exercise, the course, or both.”

*~2008-2009 Dartmouth College Student Handbook p. 72*

Over the past four years, there have been 89 allegations of violations of the Academic Honor Principle that went forward to hearings. In eighteen cases, students were found “not responsible” following a hearing. Over the past four years, 83% of the 71 students found responsible have been suspended for some period of time.

In many cases where students represented plagiarized papers, collaborated on examinations, failed to read and follow the expectations regarding individual work outlined in the syllabus, represented internet material as their own, or copied material from another student's paper during an exam, a one-year suspension has been imposed.

Over the past four years, 31 students have been suspended for one year. This is the most common sanction for violations of the Academic Honor Principle.

### **Aggravating Factors**

Committee members and deans have taken into account aggravating circumstances to increase the length of suspensions to six or more terms (5 cases), and in one case, to permanently separate a student from the College. Aggravating factors include:

- Fabrication and cover-up: efforts made by the student to camouflage academic dishonesty such as by "inventing" data, authors, quotations, or citations, etc.
- Denial: persistent failure to acknowledge responsibility after being confronted by irrefutable evidence
- Alteration of academic work: altering written work or an exam after it has been reviewed and returned and then resubmitting it to claim an error in grading
- Implicating others: creating suspicion about another student's integrity, or harming another student's academic standing, such as by copying from another student without his or her knowledge or by stealing another student's work and submitting it as one's own
- Repeated violation: academic dishonesty in more than one assignment or in more than one course

### **Mitigating factors**

Committees have also considered mitigating factors, including clarity of course expectations, the student's lack of understanding of the mechanics of citation, and relevant extreme personal circumstances to impose fewer terms of suspension. In 23 cases, students were suspended for two or three terms in circumstances that included misunderstandings regarding collaboration expectations, the student's demonstrated intent to give credit to the source, misrepresentation of or lack of citation for an insignificant amount of material, or relevant extreme medical circumstances that had a direct relationship to the violation. Students were sanctioned to a one term suspension in two cases, once for misrepresenting his/her own work in a subsequent paper and once for failing to quote a single source.

In some cases when the citation errors were minor, or students had a reasonable misunderstanding of the expectations of collaboration in a course, the sanction has been less than suspension. In 13 cases (18%), students were placed on probation for a demonstrated lack of understanding of the course expectations, sloppy methodology when transferring drafts to the final work, misunderstandings about what constituted common knowledge, and minor errors in the paper. Two students were given reprimands by the COS when the committee concluded that the course expectations were not clear or contradictory and that contributed to the students' violation of the Academic Honor Principle.

The COS has tended NOT to view a student's carelessness, exhaustion, illness, class year, nationality, financial circumstances, remorse, etc. as mitigating circumstances that should alter a sanction. In addition, students should understand that regardless of personal or medical circumstances, students are responsible for complying with the Academic Honor Principle and the College Standards of Conduct.