

The Code of Academic Integrity (CAI)

valid as of 01.01.2024

1. Introduction

1.1 General Principles of Academic Integrity

As members of the academic community at Constructor University, we promote the following fundamental principles:

- Appropriate acknowledgment and respect of others' and one's own contributions to any academic product (e.g. examination, project, paper, report, publication, presentation, etc.);
- Accurate and transparent reporting of research, facts, and opinions;
- Ethical and fair treatment of all members of the academic community with regards to all aspects of academic work;
- Actively and appropriately handling cases of general academic dishonesty, plagiarism, falsification of results or research, and other forms of cheating;
- Internalization and promotion of these principles. In cases in which a community member fails to adhere to these standards, bringing the incident to the attention of the person(s) involved and/or involving the University Committee on Academic Integrity (UCAI), when appropriate.

1.2 The Code of Academic Integrity (CAI)

The academic community of Constructor University is part of the international academic community, which is based upon its members' trust in one another. Students at Constructor University are, from their first day onward, considered future professionals and, hence, members of this community. To preserve this trust and maintain an environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, all members must act according to the principles of academic integrity: honesty, trust, respect, and fairness. Students and instructors who breach this mutual trust are subject to the consequences appropriate to the severity of the infraction.

The CAI serves to provide a common understanding of these fundamental principles and the actions that are in direct contradiction to these values. It provides students and instructors with detailed definitions of possible infractions and lists examples for sanctions.

1.3 The University Committee on Academic Integrity (UCAI)

The UCAI, a joint committee of students, faculty and staff, is the primary forum for all issues regarding academic integrity at Constructor University. In general, the committee is responsible for promoting and carrying out activities that facilitate an environment of academic integrity. The activities of the committee take place at both the informal and formal level.

At the informal level, the UCAI is responsible for providing information, support, and advice to all members of the academic community regarding any issues of academic integrity. In addition to providing informal advice, committee members can serve as mediators between parties in cases of infractions of academic integrity.

If cases cannot be solved in an informal way (e.g. by advice or mediation), the UCAI conducts formal hearings with the parties involved (see sections 3 and 4).

1.4 Additional Regulations, Committees, and Contact Persons Regarding Academic Integrity

The CAI is the main document regarding teaching-related aspects of academic integrity.

For research-related matters, Constructor University has also issued the “Policy for Safeguarding Good Research Practice at Constructor University”. The document is public on the Constructor University website under Academic Policies. This Policy implements the German Research Foundation’s Code of Conduct “Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice” (DFG codex) in the version of July 03, 2019 and is binding for all members and employees of the Constructor University.

Besides the UCAI, employed researchers at Constructor University, including faculty, staff, and contract workers like PhD students or Postdocs, can contact the Ombudsperson for any concerns related to academic integrity, especially those pertaining to research.

The Ombudsperson acts as a neutral, independent person of trust and mediator for cases of queries regarding good scientific practice and its violation through scientific dishonesty and reports directly to the President.

The Constructor University Ethics Committee must be contacted for support and advice with respect to ethical and legal aspects of research on humans, on samples taken from humans, or on personal data obtained from human participants.

2. Academic Integrity Responsibilities

2.1. General Responsibilities of Students and Instructors

As members of the academic community, both students and instructors are responsible for respecting the academic environment of the Constructor University community and doing research and course work honestly. This includes the following:

- Treat all members of the Constructor University community equally;
- Handle teaching resources, research materials, and intellectual property with respect;
- Avoid, prevent, and, when appropriate, address any disruption of research, teaching, and learning;
- Attribute the authorship of academic work honestly and precisely;
- Respect peers, colleagues, subordinates, and supervisors by sharing work tasks, information, and responsibilities;
- Acknowledge all assistance in each type of academic work and actively avoid plagiarism;
- Acknowledge the use of artificial intelligence and other computational tools in all kinds of academic and research work;
- Conduct research according to the above-mentioned rules established in the “Policy for Safeguarding Good Research Practice at Constructor University” issued by Constructor University and mentioned in 1.4;
- Protect personal and confidential information;
- Actively promote the standards of academic integrity described in this document.

2.2. Additional Responsibilities of Instructors

All instructional personnel at Constructor University (including students working as Teaching Assistants or Ph.D. students or Postdocs working as Academic Tutors), herein referred to as instructors, have the responsibility to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning, specifically to ensure that no student disturbs other students during lectures - both online and in person-, seminars, tutorials, exams or unfairly takes advantage of another student or instructor. Instructors must create an environment that promotes academic integrity. In detail, instructors must:

- Treat all students equally regarding:
 - Academic deadlines;
 - Evaluation of academic work;
 - Class participation and opportunities for class input;
 - Exam postponements and retakes;
 - Cases of suspected academic dishonesty;
- Design exam settings and assignments that prevent cheating;
- Specify the extent to which collaboration on assignments and/or the use of AI is acceptable in a course;
- Inform students at the beginning of each course about:
 - The requirements for successful completion of the course;
 - The weight placed on each requirement;
- Treat all personal information, including grades, confidentially;
- Follow, upon evidence of infringement of the CAI, the procedure(s) laid out in the CAI.

3. Infractions by Students

3.1 General

Community members of Constructor University are recommended to make use of the detailed flowchart named 'Student Infractions' available at the UCAI Teamwork page. A comprehensive document named 'Rules of Procedure for the UCAI' is also available on the homepage of the UCAI Teamwork page.

3.1.1 First Infraction

If an instructor has reason to believe that a student has committed an infraction of academic integrity in relation to a course or against him/her, the instructor must contact the department of Program Support and Development in order to determine whether or not this is the student's first infraction (if applicable, see repeat infractions; 3.1.2).

In the case that this is the student's first infraction, the instructor must determine the severity of the infraction. This determination of severity and proposal for a sanction (see 3.3) can only be made after the instructor has confronted the accused party(ies) and gathered sufficient evidence. Evaluation of the severity of the infractions and the proposed sanction should be influenced by factors such as intention and scope of the infraction. Minor sanctions are supposed to be imposed by the instructor without the involvement of the UCAI.

The student has the right to appeal the instructor's decision and bring the case to the UCAI, if the student considers imposed minor sanction inappropriate. Prior to escalating the case to the UCAI, the student is asked to discuss the incident and sanction with the instructor and an impartial third party present (i.e. a member of the UCAI, an instructor, the Academic Advisor

or a member of administration at Constructor University). The choice of the third party must be agreed upon by all parties involved. If the case is escalated to theUCAI by any of the parties involved, theUCAI may overturn or affirm the decision of the instructor. The committee may also impose a different sanction than that suggested by the instructor. In all cases, Program Support and Development must be notified of the infraction and sanction. This record of a first infraction is considered a reprimand by itself and is stored (but does not necessarily appear on the student's transcript).

For major sanctions, the instructor must always escalate the case to theUCAI (see 3.3). Then, with all due speed, the committee shall hold a hearing with both the student and the instructor, as well as any other parties involved (witnesses, etc.). During the hearing, both sides present their cases, including written reports and all evidence. The committee discusses the case based on all available information and the voting members of the committee come to a decision (by majority vote) about the next steps and/or about appropriate sanctions. A summary of the hearing and the recommendation must be written by a member of the committee, approved as to its accuracy, and signed by those present at the hearing. That summary and suggestion for an appropriate sanction must be transmitted to the department of Program Support and Development, where it is permanently stored.

In all cases, the following information must be submitted to the department of Program Support and Development:

- Infraction Committed: Please refer to Section 3.2 for a comprehensive list; for an undefined infraction, please detail the infraction;
- Sanction Imposed: Please refer to Section 3.3 (Table 1); for an undefined sanction, please detail the sanction;
- Evidence Collected: All evidence is submitted to Program Support and Development to be stored in a folder concerning this case.

Upon receiving the summary and the recommendation, the department of Program Support and Development informs the respective body who enacts the sanction. This can be the instructor (for course-related sanctions), theUCAI, the Committee on Examination and Standing, or the Executive Board together with the Registrars Office (for cases of disenrollment from the university).

3.1.2 Repeat Infractions

If a student is guilty of violating the Code of Academic Integrity at least twice (infractions of any degree of severity), this is considered a repeat infraction. As soon as the department of Program Support and Development is notified that a student has committed an infraction, and the record of the department of Program Support and Development confirms that the same student has already committed one or more infractions of any degree of severity in the past, Program Support and Development shall transfer all information of that student's past and present infractions to theUCAI. The committee must with all due speed take up the case and hold a hearing, following the procedure laid out in section 3.1.1, with both the student and the instructor who reported the latest infraction. TheUCAI must take into account all infractions committed by the student. It may affirm or reject the sanction proposed by the instructor who reported the latest infraction, or impose a different sanction.

3.2 Examples of Infractions

Examples of infractions by students are listed below. The list seeks to provide not only definitions but also common examples of infractions, wherever clarification is necessary. These

examples are not comprehensive, and infractions not listed in the examples but in accordance with the definitions is evaluated accordingly.

1. **Plagiarism:** The use of another person's intellectual property without correct acknowledgement includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:
 - a. **The below examples are instances of plagiarism infractions that would result in minor sanctions:**
 - i. Using someone else's work, even if changes are made, without proper acknowledgement or without correctly indicating the copied material;
 - ii. Using material downloaded from the Internet without acknowledging the source;
 - iii. Please note, depending on the severity and intention behind the plagiarism, the infraction may result in a major sanction.;
 - b. **The below examples are instances of plagiarism infractions that would result in major sanctions:**
 - i. Borrowing all or part of someone else's work, or the use of someone else's outline in individual work;
 - ii. Using someone else's ideas without proper acknowledgement;
 - iii. Using a paper writing service;
 - iv. Using an artificial intelligence text generator without proper acknowledgement.
2. **Self-plagiarism:** The submission of all or part of work for credit, for which credit has previously been obtained at Constructor University or any other institution, without prior consent from the instructor.
 - a. **The below examples are instances of self-plagiarism infractions that would result in minor sanctions:**
 - i. The submission of part of work for credit, for which credit had been previously obtained;
 - ii. The unintentional submission of work, for which credit had been previously obtained, without prior consent of the instructor;
 - iii. Please note, depending on the severity and intention behind the self-plagiarism, the infraction may result in a major sanction;
 - b. **The below examples are instances of self-plagiarism infractions that would result in major sanctions:**
 - i. The submission of complete work for credit, for which credit had been previously obtained.
3. **Cheating:** Gaining or attempting to gain an unfair advantage in any academic assignment, includes, but is not limited to, the following.
 - a. **The below examples are instances of cheating infractions that would result in minor sanctions:**
 - i. The use or attempted use of materials that are prohibited or that have been declared inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question;
 - ii. The collaboration on an assignment of any kind without prior consent from the instructor. This includes copying the work of others who may or may not be aware of this;

Please note, depending on the severity and intention behind the cheating, the respective infraction (i -ii) may result in a major sanction.

- b. The below examples are instances of cheating infractions that would result in major sanctions:**
 - i. The use or attempted use of materials that are prohibited or that have been declared inappropriate in the context of the exam in question;
 - ii. The collaboration on an exam of any kind without prior consent from the instructor. This includes copying the work of others who may or may not be aware of this;
 - iii. The impersonation of another student in an examination, or the submission of work in someone else’s name;
 - iv. The acquisition or distribution of confidential academic material (e.g., exams) without prior consent from the instructor;
 - v. Giving assistance to anyone cheating or aiming to cheat;
- 4. **Disruption:** Interfering in any university activities such as teaching, research, studying, or administrative work, includes, but is not limited to, the following actions.
 - a. The below examples are instances of cheating infractions that would result in minor sanctions:**
 - i. Interrupting lectures with unnecessary sounds, conversations, or other distracting activities;
 - ii. Please note, depending on the severity and intention behind the disruption, the infraction may result in a major sanction;
 - b. The below examples are instances of cheating infractions that would result in major sanctions:**
 - i. Providing an instructor or university official with false information;
 - ii. The submission of official documents to the University that have been forged, falsified, or altered;
 - iii. The unauthorized access to or alteration of university records;
 - iv. The intentional removal or defacement of shared materials that are required by other students for academic work;
 - v. The sabotage or theft of another person’s academic work;
 - vi. The commercial use of any university material or property without explicit permission;
- 5. **Bribery:** Offering (and accepting) money, gifts, or services in exchange for an unfair academic advantage or favors, and vice versa. Unfair academic advantages may include but are not limited to unduly receiving passing or increased grades, competitive positions, and/or employment. This would result in a major sanction.
- 6. **Undue influence:** Attempting to influence academic results on grounds other than merit, achievement, or (work). By utilizing one’s social position, with relation to financial, authoritative, or familial status. This would result in a major sanction.
- 7. **Fabrication of evidence:** Falsifying, modifying, or otherwise misrepresenting data and evidence for the purpose of intentionally misleading readers or deceptively presenting false information as fact. This would result in a major sanction.
- 8. **Purposefully ignoring mandatory health-related or ethical rules regarding research or academic work:** This would result in a major sanction. Some examples of this infraction include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Breaching confidentiality agreements;

- b. Conducting non-consensual research;
9. **Sanction noncompliance:** Ignoring legitimate sanctions posed by competent university authorities in accordance with the CAI. This would result in a major sanction.

3.3 Sanctions

If a student has committed an infraction of the CAI, a punishment is imposed, referred throughout this document as a “sanction.” Sanctions are divided into minor and major sanctions. Minor sanctions are generally course-related and can be enacted by instructors without the involvement ofUCAI. For example, a student may receive a grade reduction or a failing grade for the course. Major sanctions are generally non-course-related sanctions. For examples of minor and major sanctions, please refer to Table 1.

Table 1: Examples for Sanctions of Different Degrees of Severity. Note that more than one sanction can be applied.

Sanction	Minimum Severity
Reduced grade or failing grade for the entire relevant work	Minor
Repeat course work or exam	Minor
Academic Integrity Self-Reflection Report	Minor
Written reprimand	Minor
Failing grade for the entire relevant work without the possibility to repeat the course	Major
Forfeiture of right to work as a Teaching Assistant or Academic Tutor	Major
Suspension from the university with the possibility of readmission	Major
Disenrollment from the university without the possibility of readmission	Major

3.5 Right of Appeal

If either party disputes theUCAI’s decision, that party may appeal further to the University Committee on Examination and Standing (UCES).

4. Infractions Committed by Instructors

4.1 General

Examples of infractions that are specific to instructors include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **The below examples are instances of instructor infractions that would result in minor sanctions:**
 - a. Failing to design exam settings and assignments that prevent cheating within the possibilities, taking into account:

- i. the examination software available for online examinations;
 - ii. the space and seating order available for in-person examinations;
- b. Failing to define evaluation criteria for assessments in a course or research project;
- c. Redefining expectations for students regarding academic performance as described in the program handbook in a course or research project without the students' consent;
- d. Failure to respond with the minimum mandatory sanction in the event of academic dishonesty.

Please note, depending on the severity and intention behind the infraction, the respective infraction (a – d) may result in a major sanction.

2. The below examples are instances of instructor infractions that would result in major sanctions:

- a. Proven bias for or against students;
- b. Bribery (see 3.3 for definition).

Any infractions of research ethics or violations of German Labor Law committed by instructors are not under the jurisdiction of this Code. Such infractions should be reported by the concerned parties to Human Resources for further investigation.

In all cases, the committee must attempt to protect the identity of the accusing party as much as possible.

4.2 Process

4.2.1 Initiation

Students or other instructors who believe that an instructor has violated the terms of the CAI have the right to directly bring the case to the UCAI, if their rights or academic results are directly affected. The accusing party has the option to first discuss the case with the accused instructor (see also 4.2.2) and only report the incident to the UCAI if no resolution of the case can be reached.

4.2.2 Mediation

If an instructor is accused of breaching the CAI, the UCAI may decide to act as, or appoint, a mediator before opening a formal case. Mediation can involve a joint meeting with all parties, or private discussions with each party in which the accusing party may remain anonymous. The aim of the mediation is to remedy any damage to the academic standing or status of the parties, that were harmed by the actions of the instructor.

If a mutual agreement is found, then the process is concluded. A record of cases concluded on an informal basis is stored with the committee.

4.2.3 Formal Investigation

If mediation is not successful, or not desired, then the UCAI begins a formal investigation. The UCAI gathers all relevant evidence and holds a hearing with both the accusing and the accused parties as well as all other parties involved (e.g. witnesses). The aim of the formal investigation by the UCAI is to establish the following findings:

- Whether or not an infraction of the CAI has taken place;
- The content, intent, and scope of the infraction;
- The remedial action that is needed to rectify the rights and academic standing of the parties that were harmed by the actions of the instructor;

The UCAI writes a summary of its findings. It is forwarded to the respective Dean, who decides about any sanctions.

4.2.4 Right of Appeal

If an accused instructor disagrees with the findings of the UCAI, then the instructor may appeal to the respective Dean, who conducts their own investigation. If the Dean holds any further hearings or meetings, then the UCAI may send a representative to these meetings.