

# Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM)

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## Overview

The main work of the committee is the adjudication of cases of academic misconduct through appointment as hearing officer and panels populated by committee members.

- How often does the committee meet?
  - Monthly for full-committee meetings
  - Committee members are asked to be available to serve on one or two hearing panels each week.
- Does the committee meet at a set day/time? If so when:
  - The Monday before classes start (for AU24, this is Monday 8/19/24) all members attend an all-day, in person, mandatory orientation.
  - Weekly hearings are scheduled by COAM according to availability supplied by panel members, instructors, and students.
  - Monthly meetings are scheduled according to availability supplied by committee members each year.
- Do you meet in person or online?
  - Hearings are held via Zoom.
  - Full committee meetings are held in person from 4 – 5 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month during the autumn and spring semester and on Zoom for the summer semester. The specific dates for the 2024 - 2025 academic year are: September 5, October 3, November 7, December 5, January 9\* (second Thursday), February 6, March 6, April 3, May 1\* (3 - 5 p.m.), June 5\* (Zoom) and July 10\* (second Thursday, Zoom).
- If in person, where?
  - Members are notified via Carmen and email of the location of any in person meetings. The location of in person meetings vary depending on availability and size of the gathering.
- Are there subcommittees? What do they do?
  - We currently have two working groups:
    - The “COAM Helpline” is a group of committee members who are willing to do special projects to help the COAM office staff – for example, review of office processes, workflow and communication with students and instructors from intake through outcome.
    - The Sanctions working group is a group of members who are doing an audit of current sanctions, consistency and ease of application, and exploring possible additions to the educational sanctions available to the committee.

- When and where do the subcommittees meet?
  - Working groups meet according to the schedules of the members – no less than once per month.
- What is the workload like?
  - Members should expect to give approximately three hours per week of service, plus one hour per month for committee meetings.
  - Tasks include:
    - Reviewing of evidence – panel members should set aside time (approximately 30 minutes for each case) before the hearing to review evidence;
    - Hearing panels – attend via Zoom, hear the case live, participate in a discussion and decision-making with other panel members;
    - Many members will also be trained to chair hearings;
    - FERPA and IDP trainings are required each year;
    - Attendance and participation in committee meetings & discussions;
    - Attendance and participation in the full-day orientation in August;
    - Working group action steps (optional).
- Additional information for volunteers:
  - This is a great networking opportunity with colleagues across campus.
  - COAM teaches members about teaching, course design, the struggles of our students and faculty, and becoming a more inclusive community of academic integrity.
- Link: <https://senate.osu.edu/committees/academic-misconduct>

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# Expectations of COAM Members

## Mission and Charge

Under faculty rules, “Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the Committee [on Academic Misconduct].” Decisions on in violation, not in violation, or appropriate sanctions do not belong to the instructor. It is the purview of this committee, through the arm of its hearing panels, on which all of you will serve, 1) to investigate those charges (using procedures that COAM has put in place); 2) to decide on whether or not a violation has occurred; and 3) in cases in which the panel has determined that an offense has occurred, to assess an appropriate penalty.

The work of COAM is to investigate suspected cases of academic misconduct, arrive at findings, and when the committee determines there has been a violation, levy appropriate sanctions. This work is essential to the academic integrity of the university: the integrity of course work and grades; of students’ learning and education; of the certification of knowledge and competence an OSU degree provides and represents. Although the process of notification, advising, and hearing is certainly daunting to students brought into it, it is also intended to be a civilized and humane process, provided to ensure that students receive *due process*, that a suspicion is heard and determined objectively, not arbitrarily and informally, in a process common to all such cases – a process that aims to guarantee fair and common standards of proof, as well as sanctions.

*Instructors have **one month** from discovery of suspected academic misconduct to submit a completed incident report to COAM.*

### COAM Evidence

The materials submitted constitute the evidence that COAM will consider in determining whether or not the student has violated the Code of Student Conduct.

The committee members evaluating a case of alleged misconduct come from diverse academic disciplines. If the allegation involves technical or specialized subject matter, instructors should provide in their report a concise explanation or clarification for non-technical audiences.

The student is provided with a copy of the instructor’s report and all accompanying materials unless the instructor indicates that the material (e.g., a secure exam) is intended for viewing under supervision in COAM offices only. New evidence may not be introduced during a hearing.

The process is an educational process that aims to hold students accountable for their actions in fair, reasonable, and proportional ways (considering the gravity and the particular circumstances of the case) if/when they have committed actions, whether knowingly or unwittingly, that compromise the academic integrity of the institution, its courses, its programs. While striving to ensure that sanctions are proportional under comparable circumstances, the Committee must always recognize that each case is individual – no two are exactly the same. The work of the Committee is not “piecework” and must always consider (for example) the circumstances of the particular student and the course; the extent to which the student accepts responsibility (if that is appropriate under the circumstances) and seems to have learned from a mistake.

After the Committee has made its determinations, students do have recourse to a formal appeal process (a written appeal, for limited kinds of reasons) through the Office of the Provost. At that time, all the facts of the case are reviewed independently, including the recording of the panel’s hearing (if the case went to a hearing), and a decision to uphold or amend the original decision.

A summary statistical report of the work of the Committee is presented in the annual report posted on the Senate and COAM webpages. COAM holds committee meetings at least five times per year, and elects a Faculty Chair at the spring meeting.



## Time Commitment for Panel Members of COAM

Hearing panels consist of three faculty and two students (from Undergraduate Student Government (USG) or Council of Graduate Students (CGS)). A quorum is necessary to hold a hearing which consists of a minimum of four members, including at least two faculty and one student. The hearings are held on CarmenZoom typically in a one-hour sessions for one student. If more than one student is involved in a hearing, one hour is scheduled for each student. Whenever possible, the panel's collective expertise is balanced with regard to the disciplines represented and the cases to be heard.

Each week, COAM will send a series of meeting invitations from Outlook requesting your availability. It is important to respond to these requests quickly by hitting accept or decline for all times you are available. In order that we may schedule panels that are balanced, avoiding conflicts of interest, and for fairness in distribution of workload among committee members, we ask panelists to make available and hold open as many dates/times as possible. Panel members will quickly be selected and sent a new invitation indicating that you have been matched and scheduled for a hearing.

### Timeline for Scheduling:

- Friday afternoon: AVAILABILITY REQUESTED invitations typically sent to panel members to determine availability, usually two weeks or more in advance
- Monday: Response needed by all panel members for their availability
- Tuesday - Wednesday: SCHEDULED invitations sent to panel members who have been matched to a particular hearing. Assigned panel members must accept SCHEDULED invitations ASAP

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*Panel members should expect to serve weekly during the semester for three hours*

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Under normal conditions, panelists can expect to serve weekly during the semester for three hours (autumn semester through summer semester). Usually two days prior to your assigned hearing, you will receive access to OneDrive to review all the materials the instructor has submitted which is the same file that the student has also received. It is imperative that each panel member thoroughly read over all material and watch any applicable videos that corresponds to the case prior to the hearing. Panel members should come prepared to the hearing by making a list of questions that could provide a clearer understanding of what took place. In hearings, panel members should remain unbiased, objective, and thorough.

### Role of the Coordinator

The coordinator is appointed by the executive vice president and provost. All students charged with academic misconduct are asked to watch a webinar about COAM procedures and if they still have questions may request a pre-hearing conference with the coordinator. All students have an opportunity for an administrative decision should the student agree with at least one of the charges. The coordinator is present at all hearings, keeps records and prepares reports about the activities of the Committee, and makes recommendations concerning the handling of academic misconduct, when appropriate, to the Office of Academic Affairs.

The coordinator provides feedback and consultation about the committee procedures to faculty, departments, colleges, the Office of Student Conduct, and the Graduate School. In addition, the coordinator meets with an Advisory Board annually to share ideas and strategies for sustaining a culture supportive of academic integrity at the university. The members of the Advisory Board are from units across the university that play a key role in student outreach. These units include Exploration, Office of International Affairs, Center for Teaching and Writing, Student Athletic Support Services, the Office of Undergraduate Education, Regional Campuses, Office of the Executive Dean of Arts and Sciences, and the Arts and Sciences Honors Program.

### Additional Information

The rules outlining the structure of the Committee, membership list, and other information can be found at the website for the Office of the University Senate <https://senate.osu.edu> and on the website for COAM <https://oaa.osu.edu/academic-integrity-and-misconduct>.

