

Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) Annual Report

Summer Semester 2020 – Spring Semester 2021

Prepared by

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The University's *Code of Student Conduct* defines academic misconduct as "any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the university or subvert the educational process" (Faculty Rule 3335-23-04[A]). The Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) is charged with maintaining the University's academic integrity by investigating and adjudicating "all reported cases of student academic misconduct, with the exception of cases in a professional college having a published honor code." In instances where a student has violated the University's *Code of Student Conduct*, COAM decides upon "suitable disciplinary action" (University Rule 3335-5-487[B]). The data for this year's annual report consist of cases resolved from May 10, 2020, to May 9, 2021 and the report follows the templates for reporting developed by previous COAM chairs and coordinators.

The data in this report reflect changes that resulted from a shift to online learning because of COVID-19. COAM resumed panel hearings using Carmen Zoom at the start of Summer 2020 term. Links to previous annual reports can be found on the Senate website http://senate.osu.edu/?page_id=183 or at <http://oaa.osu.edu/coamreports.html>. It should be noted that the 2012-13 reporting year was shorter in comparison with previous years because of calendar changes associated with OSU's conversion to semesters.

COAM is composed of 22 faculty members, nine graduate students (appointed by CGS), and nine undergraduate students (appointed by USG). The work of COAM is facilitated by the Coordinator who (1) receives and processes allegations of academic misconduct, (2) notifies students of allegations of academic misconduct, (3) consults with students and faculty regarding allegations of academic misconduct, (4) schedules hearings to resolve allegations of academic misconduct, and (5) notifies students and faculty of the outcomes of these hearings.

Every student who is charged with academic misconduct has the right to a hearing before a panel of COAM. A panel consists of at least four members of COAM, and the rules require that each panel have at least two faculty representatives and one student representative. The panel serves as an impartial hearing body that hears evidence and determines (1) if a student has violated the University’s *Code of Student Conduct*, and (2) an appropriate sanction in cases where a student is found “in violation.” If a student agrees with the allegations of academic misconduct and waives their right to a hearing, they may have the allegations resolved as an administrative decision. For an administrative decision, a member of COAM, typically the Coordinator, serves as a hearing officer and determines appropriate sanctions.

I. SUMMARY OF CASES RESOLVED

During the 2020-2021 academic year, COAM resolved 1112 cases of alleged academic misconduct. Of the cases resolved, 80.1% were resolved as administrative decisions and 19.9% were resolved as panel hearings (**Table 1**).

Table 1
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Summary of Total Cases Resolved and Method of Resolution
2020-2021 Academic Year

Method of Resolution	Number of Cases	% of Total Cases
Administrative Decisions	891	80.1
Panel Hearings	221	19.9
Totals	1112	100

Of the cases resolved by COAM this past reporting year, 1031¹ (92.7%) resulted in verdicts of “in violation” (**Table 2**).

¹ Total verdicts adjusted after appeals, as noted in Section VI of this report.

Table 2
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Distribution of Cases by Verdict
2020-2021 Academic Year

	Students Found “Not In Violation”	Students Found “In Violation”	Total Cases
Totals	81	1031	1112

II. SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT CHARGES

When allegations of academic misconduct arise, a student often does not know or understand what they have allegedly done wrong. Since COAM desires that the hearing process be an educational process, the Coordinator meets with students charged with violating the Code of Student Conduct upon request and explains the nature of the behavior that led to the allegations. Table 3 summarizes information on academic misconduct charges for the 2020-2021 academic year. The left column is a list of the types of charges used most commonly by COAM. The “Number of Charges” column lists the total number of charges assigned by COAM for each particular violation, and the “% of Total Charges” column lists the number of charges as a percentage of the total charges (2524). The last two columns list the number of findings of “in violation” associated with each charge and the respective percentage for each. For example, of 292 charges of plagiarism, 273 (93.5%) were found “in violation.”

Students are often charged with and found “in violation” of more than one charge. Thus, the total number of charges (2524) exceeds the total number of cases resolved by COAM (1112), and the total for “Number In Violation” (2282) exceeds the actual number of *students* found “in violation” (1014).

The relatively lower values for the percentages of students found “in violation” of unauthorized collaboration and copying are potentially misleading. They result because COAM often treats the charges of “copying” and “unauthorized collaboration” as mutually exclusive. In many of the cases where COAM receives information alleging that one student may have copied the work of another student, it is not clear which student (if any) copied and whether or not there was collusion (working together in an unauthorized manner). Thus, in many of these cases, the students involved are charged with both copying *and* unauthorized collaboration but may be found “in violation” of only one of those charges. In other words, copying is considered to be a unilateral act, where one student copies from another, whereas unauthorized collaboration involves two students working together.

“Failure to comply with course/program policies/guidelines” generally accompanies the other more specific charges, and so a student who is found in violation on a specific charge may also be found—by entailment—in violation of course policy. In the majority of COAM cases, charges

against students stem from the failure to follow course or assignment guidelines, and this charge may be used by itself alone if the allegations stem directly from a failure to follow course guidelines.

COAM’s list of standard charges was updated in 2013-14 to better correspond to the examples listed in the revised Code of Student Conduct. The following charges were added to COAM’s standard charges in 2013-14: (1) “Knowingly providing or receiving information during examinations such as course examinations and candidacy examinations; or the possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during those examinations”, and (2) “Compromising the academic integrity of the university/subverting the educational process”, which refers to rule 3335-23-04 A of the Code of Student Conduct. It should be noted that alleged violations related to examinations might also be covered by other charges such as copying or unauthorized collaboration/ unauthorized assistance and thus the number of cases associated with this charge likely underestimates the number of incidents that occur during exams or other assessments. The latter charge is generally qualified with a specific description of the alleged misconduct when it falls outside of the most frequent charges or when the standard charges do not adequately capture the nature of the alleged misconduct. A large increase in students charged with “Knowingly providing or receiving information during examinations such as course examinations and candidacy examinations; or the possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during those examinations” was an effect of the switch to online learning due to COVID-19.

Table 3
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Summary of Academic Misconduct Charges by Type and Verdict
2020-2021 Academic Year

Charge	Number of Charges	% of Total Charges	Number in Violation	% in Violation
Violation of course rules or assignment guidelines as contained in the course syllabus or other information provided to the student	1105	43.8	1023	92.6
Submitting plagiarized work for an academic requirement	292	11.6	273	93.5
Unauthorized collaboration by sharing information during an academic activity/unauthorized sharing of electronic files	179	7.9	149	83.2
Copying the work of another and representing it as one's own work	271	10.7	229	84.4
Knowingly requesting, receiving or providing unauthorized assistance during an academic activity	39	1.5	32	82.1

Possession or use of unauthorized materials during an academic activity	133	5.3	117	88.0
Compromising the academic integrity of the university/subverting the educational process + "other"	13	0.5	9	69.2
Falsification, fabrication or dishonesty in creating or reporting laboratory results, research reports, and/or any other assignments	5	0.2	5	100.0
Knowingly providing or receiving information during examinations such as course examinations and candidacy examinations; or the possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during those examinations.	469	18.6	439	93.6
Engaging in activities that unfairly place other students at an academic disadvantage.	1	0.0	1	100.0
Alteration and resubmission of course materials, grades, or marks in an attempt to change the earned credit or grade	0	0.0	0	0.0
Forgery	1	0.0	1	100.0
Providing falsified materials, documents, or records to a university official in order to meet academic qualifications, criteria, or requirements	0	0.0	0	0.0
Serving as or enlisting the assistance of a substitute for a student during an academic activity	6	0.2	4	66.7
Submission of work not performed in a course or degree program/ Submitting substantially the same work to satisfy requirements for one course or academic requirement that has been submitted in satisfaction of requirements for another course or academic requirement without permission.	10	0.4	9	90.0
Violation of program regulations or policies as established by departmental committees and made available to students.	0	0.0	0	0.0
Totals	2524	100%	2282	--

III. SUMMARY OF CASES BASED ON STUDENT'S ENROLLMENT UNIT AND THE INITIATING UNIT

Twenty enrollment units on campus were represented in the cases resolved by COAM during the 2020-21 reporting year, with combined cases from the College of the Arts and Sciences (UASC), College of Engineering (UENG), and the Fisher College of Business (UBUS) accounting for 73.5% of the total cases (**Table 4**). It should be noted that although the Graduate School is listed as the enrollment units for 34 cases, those students were in graduate programs offered by other academic departments and/or colleges.

The cases heard by COAM during the past year were *initiated* from or involved courses from 70 units across the University, with the combined cases from courses in Mathematics (234 cases), Chemistry and Biochemistry (194), Computer Science Engineering (144) and Statistics (59) accounting for 56.7% of the total cases (**Table 5**). Some units of the university now offer instruction as part of certification programs that may not involve courses listed in the official course catalog maintained by the Registrar. Since the definition of a student in the Code of Student Conduct includes any person who entered into agreement with the university to take instruction, allegations of academic misconduct in these certification programs are reported to COAM. Those cases are included in the "Other" category at the bottom of **Tables 5, 6 and 7**.

Table 4
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Distribution of Cases Based on Student's Enrollment Unit
2020-2021 Academic Year

Enrollment Unit	Total for Enrollment Unit	% of Total
UASC (College of the Arts and Sciences)	469	41.18%
UENG (College of Engineering)	258	23.20%
UEXP (Exploration Program)	86	7.73%
UBUS (College of Business)	80	7.19%
UEHE (Education and Human Ecology)	53	4.77%
GRD (Graduate School)	34	3.06%
UHRS (School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences) + UHRSP (Pre-	29	2.61%
UAGR (College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences)	25	2.25%
UPHR (College of Pharmacy)	17	1.53%
USWK (College of Social Work)	10	0.90%
UENR (School of Environment and Natural Resources	9	0.81%
UACD (Academy)	8	0.72%
UATI (Agricultural Technical Institute)	8	0.72%
UDHY (Dental Hygiene) + UDHYP (Dental Hygiene Pre-program)	8	0.72%
UPBH (College of Public Health) + UPBHP (Public Health Pre-program)	7	0.63%
UNUR (College of Nursing) + UNURP (Nursing Pre-program)	4	0.36%
VSTR (Visitor)	3	0.27%
UND (Undergraduate Non-Degree)	2	0.18%
UAHR (School of Architecture)	1	0.09%
UJGS (John Glenn College of Public Affairs)	1	0.09%
Totals	1112	100%

Table 5
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Distribution of Cases Based on Initiating Unit
2020-2021 Academic Year

Course Offering Unit	Number of Cases	% of Total
MATH [Mathematics]	234	21.04%
CHEM [Chemistry and Biochemistry]	194	17.45%
CSE [Computer Science and Engineering]	144	12.95%
STAT [Statistics]	59	5.31%
ENGR [Engineering]	43	3.87%
ACCTMIS [Accounting and Management Information Systems]	42	3.78%
PSYCH [Psychology]	39	3.51%
ISE [Integrated Systems Engineering]	27	2.43%
HISTORY	21	1.89%
ECE [Electrical and Computer Engineering]	19	1.71%
BIOLOGY	16	1.44%
COMM [Communications]	15	1.35%
ENGLISH	13	1.17%
MATSCEN [Materials Science Engineering]	13	1.17%
SOCIOL [Sociology]	13	1.17%
ECON [Economics]	11	0.99%
GEOG [Geography]	11	0.99%
ANTHROP [Anthropology]	9	0.81%
MECHENG [Mechanical Engineering]	9	0.81%
DENTHYG [Dental Hygiene]	8	0.72%
SOCWORK [Social Work]	8	0.72%
FDSCTE [Food Science and Technology]	7	0.63%
PHR [Pharmacy]	7	0.63%
THEATRE	7	0.63%
CIVILEN [Civil Engineering]	6	0.54%
EDUTL [Education Teaching and Learning]	6	0.54%
MUSIC	6	0.54%
NURSING	6	0.54%
AEDECON [Agricultural, Environmental and Developmental Economics]	5	0.45%
ANATOMY	5	0.45%

Table 6 (continued) Distribution of Cases Based on Initiating Unit

BUSFIN [Business Finance]	5	0.45%
HUMNNTR [Human Nutrition]	5	0.45%
ITALIAN	5	0.45%
PHYSICS	5	0.45%
POLITSC [Political Science]	5	0.45%
PUBAFRS [John Glenn School of Public Affairs]	5	0.45%
RUSSIAN	5	0.45%
ARTEDUC [Art Education]	4	0.36%
BIOMEDE [Biomedical Engineering]	4	0.36%
BUSML [Business Management and Logistics]	4	0.36%
LINGUIST [Linguistics]	4	0.36%
MOLGEN [Molecular Genetics]	4	0.36%
BUSMGT [Business Management]	3	0.27%
CLAS [Center for Latin America Studies]	3	0.27%
COMLDR [Communications and Leadership]	3	0.27%
COMPSTD [Comparative Studies]	3	0.27%
EARTHSC [Earth Sciences]	3	0.27%
ESEPSY [Educational Psychology]	3	0.27%
HISTART [History of Art]	3	0.27%
PHILOS [Philosophy]	3	0.27%
SPANISH	3	0.27%
BIOPHRM [Biopharmacy]	2	0.18%
CONSYSM [Consumer Systems]	2	0.18%
CONCFSS [Consumer and Family Financial Services]	2	0.18%
FILMSTD [Film Studies]	2	0.18%
FRENCH	2	0.18%
INTSTDS [International Studies]	2	0.18%
MICROBIO [Microbiology]	2	0.18%
AFAMAST [African American and African Studies]	1	0.09%
AGRCOMM [Agricultural Communications]	1	0.09%
ANIMSCI [Animal Sciences]	1	0.09%
ART	1	0.09%
AVIATN [Aviation]	1	0.09%
DANCE	1	0.09%

Table 6 (continued) Distribution of Cases Based on Initiating Unit

ENTMLGY [Entomology]	1	0.09%
GERMAN	1	0.09%
HCINNOV [Healthcare Innovation]	1	0.09%
HDFS [Human Development and Family Studies]	1	0.09%
KNSFHP [Kinesiology: Sports, Fitness and Health Program]	1	0.09%
PUBHEPI [Public Health]	1	0.09%
TOTAL	1112	100%

IV. SUMMARY OF CASES BASED ON STUDENT’S RANK AND COURSE LEVEL

Approximately 79% of the cases resolved by COAM during the 2020-21 reporting year were the result of misconduct allegations in 1000- and 2000-level courses (Table 6). Fewer cases resulted from allegations in progressively higher-level courses. Some cases of academic misconduct occur outside of a formal class taken for academic credit. Those cases are included in the category “Other”.

Table 6
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Distribution of Cases Based on Course Level (Number)
2020-2021 Academic Year

Course Level (Semesters)	Number of Cases	% of Cases
1000	353	31.7%
2000	527	47.4%
3000	105	9.4%
4000	65	5.8%
5000	37	3.3%
6000	13	1.2%
7000	10	0.9%
8000	1	0.1%
Other	1	0.1%
TOTAL	1112	100%

Table 7 summarizes the number of cases resolved at each level by student class rank. The distribution of cases for undergraduates is fairly evenly distributed across all ranks. The greatest number of cases and the highest percentage of cases within a single rank was for rank 2 students. Undergraduates are entering the university with more credit hours, which means that some rank 2 students are in their first year at the university. The largest number of cases involved ranks 3 and 4 students. When cases by rank are expressed as a percentage of total students within each rank based on fifteenth-day student enrollment for Autumn 2020, the distribution of cases was as follows: rank 1=1.62% (11,291 students); rank 2=2.32% (11,068 students), rank 3=2.58% (11,834 students), rank 4=1.72% (19,249 students), and graduate students (excluding graduate professional students)=0.31% (11,110 students). Note: a rank of “Other” may represent visitor or other individuals who took courses as non-degree students and/or were enrolled in a certification program.

Table 7
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Distribution of Cases Based on Student Rank and Course Level
2020-2021 Academic Year

Rank	1	2	3	4	GRD	Other	Totals	% by Course Level
Course Level								
1000	136	118	53	46	0	0	353	31.7%
2000	41	118	207	161	0	0	527	47.4%
3000	6	14	29	56	0	0	105	9.4%
4000	0	7	14	44	0	0	65	5.8%
5000	0	0	2	21	13	0	36	3.2%
6000	0	0	0	3	10	0	13	1.2%
7000	0	0	0	0	10	1	11	1.0%
8000	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.1%
Other	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.1%
TOTAL	183	257	305	331	34	2	1112	100.00%
% by Rank	16.4%	23.1%	27.4%	29.8%	3.1%	0.2%	100.00%	

V. Summary of Disciplinary and Grade Sanctions

When COAM finds that a student has violated the University's *Code of Student Conduct*, COAM imposes sanctions. A sanction typically includes a disciplinary component and a grade-related component.

The disciplinary sanctions imposed by COAM and the number of cases involved are summarized in **Table 8**. Of the 1112 cases resolved during the 2020-2021 Academic Year, 1031 resulted in a finding of "in violation" and these were accompanied by a disciplinary sanction. As these data demonstrate, most students found *in violation of the Code of Student Conduct* received a sanction of "disciplinary probation."

Table 8
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Summary of Disciplinary Sanctions
2020-2021 Academic Year

Disciplinary Sanction	Number of Cases "In Violation"	% of Cases
Formal reprimand	25	2.4%
Disciplinary probation (range = 1 term to "until graduation")	994	96.4%
Suspension (range = 1 to 3 terms)	11	1.1%
Dismissal	1	0.1%
Totals	1031	100%

The grade sanctions imposed by COAM and the numbers of cases involved are summarized in **Table 9**.

Of the 1031 cases in which a student was found "in violation" in 2020-21, no grade sanction was authorized in 7 of the cases. As these data demonstrate, the modal grade sanction for students found "in violation" of the University's *Code of Student Conduct* is an authorization for a "0" on all or part of the assignment and a further reduction of the student's final grade.

In most instances, COAM authorizes the instructor to award a grade sanction. In some instances, COAM imposes the sanction of a failing grade directly via the Registrar: “re-enroll with a failing grade” and “E” by action of University Committee. These failing grades may not be removed from the advising report or transcript by petition or retroactive withdrawal from the course. Hearing panels and hearing officers have the option to create grade sanctions appropriate to individual cases of academic misconduct. Grade sanctions created by hearing panels or hearing officers are included in the category “Other”.

Table 9
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Summary of Grade Sanctions
2020-2021 Academic Year

Grade Sanction	Number of Cases	% of Cases
None	7	0.7%
Authorization for a "0" on all or part of the assignment	92	8.9%
Authorization for a reduction in the student's final course grade	35	3.4%
Authorization for “0” on the assignment and a further reduction of the final letter grade in the course	836	81.1%
Authorization for a final grade of "E" or “U” in the course	8	0.8%
Final Grade of E/U/NP by “action of University Committee”	11	1.1%
Re-enroll with a final failing grade for the course	4	0.4%
Other	38	3.7%
Totals	1031	100%

A summary of the disciplinary sanctions received by graduate students who were found in violation of the Code of Student Conduct is given in **Table 10**.

Table 10
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Summary of Disciplinary Sanctions for Graduate Students
2020-2021 Academic Year

Disciplinary Sanction	Number of Cases "In Violation"	% of Cases
Formal reprimand	0	0.0%
Disciplinary probation (range = 1 term to "until graduation")	31	96.9%
Suspension (range = 1 to 4 terms)	1	3.1%
Dismissal	0	0.0%
Totals	32	100%

A summary of the grade sanctions received by graduate students during the 2019-2020 academic year is provided in **Table 11**.

Table 11
Committee on Academic Misconduct
Summary of Grade Sanctions for Graduate Students
2020-2021 Academic Year

Grade Sanction	Number of Cases	% of Cases
None	0	0.0%
Authorization for a "0" on all or part of the assignment	2	6.3%
Authorization for a reduction in the student's final course grade	5	15.6%
Authorization for "0" on the assignment and a further reduction of the final letter grade in the course	24	75.0%

Authorization for a final grade of "E" or "U" in the course	0	0.0%
Final Grade of E/U/NP by "action of University Committee"	1	3.1%
Re-enroll with a final failing grade for the course	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Totals	32	100%

VI. Appeals

A student who has been found in violation of the *Code of Student Conduct* has the right to appeal the original decision of the hearing panel or hearing officer. The appeal is not intended to re-hear or re-argue the same case, and is limited to specific grounds as outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct*. Appeals of decisions of the Committee on Academic Misconduct or its Coordinator are submitted for decision to the Executive Vice President and Provost or designee. Of the 1031 cases in which the student was found to be in violation by COAM in 2020-2021, 38 cases were appealed. In 33 instances, the decision of the Committee was upheld. Five of the appeals were granted. In those five cases the grade sanction was changed. The disciplinary sanctions were not changed in those five cases.