

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY VIOLATIONS

ADVOCACY

I received an email alleging that I cheated or plagiarized my work—what does this mean?

When instructors suspect that a student has cheated or plagiarized their work, they have a responsibility to report it; when this happens, they are simply doing their job. First, it's important not to panic. Many students who receive these emails panic and immediately respond to their instructor a hastily written email, which can then be used as their 'perspective' in the investigation. Stop, take a breath. Remember, this is an *allegation* of academic misconduct—you are not automatically guilty of violating the policy. When an investigation starts, you will have the opportunity to respond to the allegation.

What is the best way to respond to these allegations? When responding to allegations of cheating or plagiarism, there are a few things to keep in mind: if you did knowingly cheat or plagiarize, it's important that you own this mistake. We all have weak moments where we make the wrong decision; it's important to own your choices and make changes so you don't do it again. Remember, if you did cheat or plagiarize, even if you didn't *intend* to, it may still be considered a violation of the policy—it's important to learn from this mistake so you don't repeat it.

If you feel this allegation was made in error, this is your opportunity to give your side of the story and provide any documentation or evidence to support your side. Should you opt to write a response email, do so calmly, using a professional tone—if you need to take some time away from it before formulating your thoughts, that's ok. It's best to respond when you've had some time to reflect, rather than responding as a reaction; just don't take too long to respond. You're welcome

to send a draft email to a BCITSA Advocacy Specialist to review before submitting.

If you respond to the allegation in person (or via video), take some time to prepare your thoughts and have an outline written beforehand to stay organized. You can invite an Advocacy Specialist to attend this meeting with you. Note: if you choose not to respond to an allegation, be aware that a decision will be made *without* your input.

What is an Academic Integrity Report and what does it mean for my future?

An Academic Integrity Report is created if an investigation leads to a finding of academic misconduct. This Report is sent to the Student Life Office, outlining the allegations, violations of policy (finding), and any sanctions (or outcomes). The Report is kept at the Student Life Office, but it does not become part of your transcript at BCIT.

The purpose of the Report is to document that there has been a finding, and should you cheat or plagiarize *again*, it will demonstrate a pattern of behavior, leading to a more severe sanction. The Reports may only be accessed by the Student Life Managers or your Associate Dean. This means the Report will not be accessed by your instructors, friends, parents, future employers, immigration consultant, etc.

Can I appeal a decision I feel was given unfairly? Yes, findings of academic misconduct can be appealed through a process called the Decision Review Board. It's highly encouraged that you speak with an Advocacy Specialist about this process to ensure this is the right step to take.