

# Prince William County Public Schools International Baccalaureate Programme Academic Integrity Policy

## Statement of Purpose

In Prince William County Schools (PWCS), we are committed to fostering a culture of academic integrity based on the five fundamentals of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility among all members of our school community. The PWCS mission is that we:

- Serve as trusted partners in education with our students, families, and community.
- Prepare our students to be critical thinkers, responsible digital citizens, innovators and visionaries, resilient individuals, and global collaborators.
- Commit to inclusive practices and equity with an expectation of excellence from every student and employee every day.

The primary purpose of this policy is to ensure all members of our International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme learning community understand the importance of academic integrity, what it means to live and learn together in a principled way, and what each member's responsibilities are in upholding these standards. The fundamentals of integrity are reflected in the "Code of Behavior" in its stated expectations that students "are to neither give nor receive assistance...(on) assignments that are to be graded as the work of a single individual," and that students "shall not make false accusations ... (nor) give false information."

This is in accordance with the IB Learner Profile and IB Standards & Practices:

- Culture 3: The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews an academic integrity policy that creates cultures of ethical academic practice (0301-03)
- Lifelong Learners 4: Students grow in their ability to make informed, reasoned, ethical judgments (0402-04)

The IB Learner Profile attribute most closely aligned with academic integrity is Principled – demonstrating integrity, honesty, and respect for others.

However, academic integrity also reflects many other attributes:

- Inquirer: Developing strong research skills
- Knowledgeable: Exploring ideas across multiple disciplines
- Open-Minded: Understanding diverse perspectives and distinguishing fact from opinion

- Communicator: Expressing ideas clearly in various forms
- Thinker: Analyzing and evaluating information critically
- Caring: Valuing and learning about others
- Risk-Taker: Trying new approaches and strategies
- Reflective: Considering personal ideas and learning experiences

Together, these attributes support a holistic understanding of academic integrity as a foundation for ethical learning and personal growth.

## Defining Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the commitment to ethical behavior and moral principles in all aspects of learning. It involves producing original work, properly acknowledging the ideas of others, and taking ownership of one's learning. It is foundational to academic growth, the IB Learner Profile, and the development of Approaches to Learning skills.

Academic integrity fosters personal responsibility and encourages all members of the school community to complete academic work honestly – without unauthorized help or uncredited sources. The school's practices aim to build a positive learning culture by helping students develop the skills needed for honest, independent work.

## Community Responsibilities

The successful functioning of academic integrity depends on mutual confidence and trust among students, teachers, families, and administrative staff. Each member of the community has the following responsibilities in ensuring Prince William County Schools is a fair and respectful place to learn:

- **Students**
  - Maintain integrity and honesty by upholding the IB Academic Integrity Policy and taking responsibility for their actions.
  - Maintain good attendance and consistently meet deadlines
  - Manage their own learning by frequently monitoring their grades, and communicating with their teachers and coordinators
  - Consult with teachers on citing and referencing before using outside sources and/or research on assignments
  - Give due recognition to sources from which material is quoted, summarized or paraphrased using conventions of an accepted style guide (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)
- **Teachers**

- Discuss, model and teach academic integrity, honesty, fairness, and respect for others.
- Conduct scenarios in which academic misconduct may occur, so students are prepared to make principled choices.
- Set clear expectations for assignments and provide guidance to students on how to correctly cite the sources they have consulted.
- Review technology policies for work in and outside of the classroom.
- Design assignments that do not lend themselves to academic misconduct.
- Academic honesty must be a part of the daily routine within the class community.
- **Families**
  - Holds students accountable for the academic standards established by the IB Programme, the PWCS Code of Behavior, and the IB Academic Integrity Policy, and supports fair consequences when necessary.
  - Discuss the IB Academic Integrity Policy with their student(s) at the beginning of each year.
  - Read and respond to SchoolStatus messages from the school regarding their students' learning.
  - Systematically check their students' grades on ParentVUE at interim and marking periods to monitor their learning.
  - Communicate with teachers and IB Coordinators about any questions or concerns they may have.
  - Familiarize themselves with the online resources available to students.
- **Librarians**
  - Experts in the appropriate use and referencing of source material.
  - Familiarizes students with the resources that are available to them.
  - Provide online and print resources, as well as individualized help, on citation formats such as MLA, APA, and Chicago.
  - Collaborate with teachers to co-teach research, literacy and writing skills, as well as prepare relevant resources for various lessons/units.
- **IB Coordinators**
  - Discuss, model and teach academic integrity, honesty, fairness, and respect for others.
  - Lead the process of reviewing the IB Academic Integrity Policy annually.
  - Make the IB Academic Integrity Policy readily available online and in print.
  - Lead professional development for teachers on modeling, setting expectations, and enforcing the IB Academic Integrity Policy.

## Academic Misconduct: Definitions, Procedures, and Potential Consequences

Academic Misconduct refers to violations of the IB Academic Integrity Policy and is defined by the IB as any “behavior that results in, or may result in, the student or any other student gaining an unfair advantage (or a behavior that disadvantages other students) in one or more assessment components” (*Academic Honesty in the Diploma Programme*, 2019). Such behavior includes – but is not limited to – the following infractions:

- Plagiarism – presenting work or ideas from another source as your own, with or without consent from the original author.
- Collusion – working together in a deceitful way to develop a submission for an assessment which should be completed individually.
  - The key determining factor between collusion and collaboration is whether everyone has undertaken the learning and production of evidence of learning on their own. For example, studying together for a test that each student then takes independently is collaboration, not collusion. Dividing a chapter of assigned reading in half and sharing notes to copy so that each student appears to have learned all the material is collusion.
- Exam Misconduct – taking actions during an examination which provide an unfair academic advantage, such as possessing or accessing unauthorized materials, looking at someone else’s work, or navigating away from an assessment online.
- Duplication of Work – submitting the same research or work for grades in multiple classes.
- Unauthorized Communication – communicating in such a way as to give or gain an unfair academic advantage; this may be while an exam is in session or outside of the exam.
- Unauthorized Use of Technology – utilizing technology to gain an unfair academic advantage, whether through research, AI, or collusion.
- Consistent Failure to Meet Deadlines – misusing the county late work and reassessment policy to gain the unfair academic advantage of extra time or an alternate assessment.
- Patterns of Absence on Assessment Days – failing to attend school on due dates or assessments dates to gain the unfair academic advantage of extra time or an alternate assessment, or to engage in unauthorized communication regarding the assessment.

PWCS approaches each instance of potential student academic misconduct as a collaborative investigation amongst the classroom teacher(s), the student(s), the family, the coordinator(s), and the administrator(s). The goal in each circumstance is to determine not only whether an

infraction has occurred, but why the infraction occurred and how to prevent future academic misconduct.

## FAQ

### Students

- **Q: What if I'm not sure if I'm citing something correctly?**
  - A: Each school has a variety of supports for students to learn the proper research methodology. It is always a good first step to check with your teacher, but your school's librarian can also offer a wealth of resources. Often, these resources are available online through the library Canvas page.
- **Q: Is it okay for me and my friends to work together on our assignments?**
  - A: Collaborating can be a great way to learn. Before collaborating on any assignment, it is a good idea to check with your teacher. The most important thing is that each student engages with the assignment to learn the intended content and skills. Before dividing any assignment or sharing your personal work with others, you should secure permission from your teacher. It is always okay to study together to prepare for in-class assessments, but it is not always okay to complete assignments together.
- **Q: Can I ask my family to read over my assignments and give me feedback?**
  - A: Yes. As drafting is an important part of completing assignments, it is a great idea to receive feedback. There is a difference though between receiving feedback that helps you improve your own work and receiving answers/support that take the place of your own work. It is a good idea to receive feedback orally rather than in writing so there is no chance of feedback becoming plagiarism or collusion. It is also a good idea to let your teachers know when you have had a family member provide feedback as part of your process.
- **Q: Can I use AI to help me word something better?**
  - A: AI is an integrated part of many grammar checkers such as Grammarly and Microsoft Word. It is not an academic integrity violation to have AI point out portions of your writing that need to be re-worked; it is a violation to have AI create your words for you. Always ensure that your words are your own or that they are quoted and cited as the work of someone else/AI.

### Families

- **Q: Is it okay to help my students with their assignments?**

- A: Yes. As drafting is an important part of completing assignments, it is a great idea to provide feedback to your students as they work. There is a difference though between providing feedback that helps your students improve their own work and providing answers/support that take the place of their own work. It is a good idea to provide feedback orally rather than in writing so there is no chance of feedback becoming plagiarism or collusion. It is also a good idea to let your students' teachers know when you have provided feedback as part of your students' process.
- **Q: A teacher contacted me to say my student committed an academic integrity violation. Who should I contact to discuss this further?**
  - A: All reported incidents of academic misconduct go through your school's IB Coordinator or school administrator. Please contact your student's IB Coordinator or school administrator.
- **Q: My student told me that other students cheated during an exam. Who should I notify?**
  - A: Ensuring academic integrity is the responsibility of the entire school community, so it is great that your student reported it. Please contact your student's IB Coordinator or school administrator to report the concern.
- **Q: Where can my students get help with how to research and cite their work?**
  - A: Each school's library has great resources, and librarians are available to help students learn proper research and citation methods. You can also reach out to your student's teacher(s) and/or IB Coordinator to let them know your student would like additional support with research.

## Teachers

- **Q: I suspect that a student has cheated on an assignment; what should my first steps be?**
  - A: Please take your concern and any supporting documentation to the IB Coordinator or school administrator. They will investigate, determine whether there has been a violation, and assign interventions or consequences as appropriate.
- **Q: How can I more effectively prevent incidents of academic misconduct?**
  - A: The clearer you are with expectations and the more explicitly you teach good academic habits, the fewer issues you will have with academic misconduct. Your IB Coordinator can provide specific resources and guidance, but consider the following:

- Does your assignment specifically state whether collaboration or use of technology is allowed?
- Have you discussed with students what they should do if they get confused on how to complete an assignment when they are working at home?
- Are resources on proper research and citations available for students and families through Canvas?
- **Q: I want to do a project with my class involving research. Are there resources that could help me teach the proper methods and citations?**
  - A: Yes! Your school librarian would love for you to reach out to collaborate and share resources.

This policy was collaboratively created by the PWCS IB Coordinators and the Advanced Academics and Specialty Programs office in 2024-25. It is available on the PWCS website and on each IB school's website.

## **Academic Integrity Resource**

[PWCS Code of Behavior](#)

Reviewed May 2025