

# Policies

## Admission Policies

*The following policies and procedures apply to the graduate admissions processes only. While the information stated in this document is complete and accurate to the best of our abilities, the policies detailed in this document in no way serve as a contract. Requirements vary by graduate program. The policies outlined in this document will undergo periodic review.*

### Application and Enrollment Requirements

Applications are accepted only online. Once fully completed, they are reviewed by the Graduate Admission Committee of the Office of Graduate Studies. Specific programs may require additional application components than those listed below and/or have stricter admissions requirements.

Applicants are required to create an account by registering a username and password in order to start an application, save it, and log back in at any time to complete it before submission. Once the application is submitted, applicants receive an email containing their Merrimack admission ID and instructions regarding how to check their application status.

A complete application to a graduate program must include:

- Online application – The online application may be completed and submitted at any time, as admissions review occurs on a rolling basis. It is not necessary to submit all materials simultaneously. There is no application fee.
- Official college transcript(s) - Official transcripts are required and must reflect all courses taken and grades and credentials received from all institutions attended. Transcript(s) need to be issued by the appropriate records office of the institution and must be stamped and authenticated. Transcript(s) must show courses and grades from all years of study, not just the final year(s). If credits were transferred between one or more institutions, separate transcripts must be submitted for each institution attended unless course title, level, grades and credits earned at each previous institution appear on the transcript(s) submitted to Merrimack.
- Resume – A resume or CV that contains a summary of relevant job experience and education is required. A statement of relevant activities, awards, and interests may also be submitted.
- Personal statement - All applicants are required to submit a personal statement (500-1,000 words) explaining their interest in the program and their future goals. Some programs have additional essay requirements, and applicants are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the requirements of the program to which they are applying.
- Recommendations - Two professional or academic recommendations are required. Recommenders may submit a letter of recommendation or complete the recommendation form provided by the Office of Graduate Studies.
- Documentation of the conferral of a bachelor's degree from a regionally-accredited institution in the United States or a comparable degree from a foreign academic institution, reflected in an official transcript, must be submitted before a student can be matriculated.
- Some programs may require an interview prior to admission.
- Standardized test scores are optional.

The following programs have additional requirements:

The Higher Education program requires one letter from a college professor and one from a college administrator. The Community Engagement program requires one letter from a college professor and one letter from a supervisor in a non-profit, higher education or K-12 setting.

The Teacher Education program requires that the two letters of recommendation address the applicant's capacity for leadership and professionalism, and their ability to succeed in this program. Letters should be from a direct

supervisor or college professor who can address the applicant's interest and potential for success in a graduate education program.

The School Counseling program requires that the two letters of recommendation speak to the applicant's capacity for leadership and professionalism, and their ability to succeed in the graduate program. Letters should be signed by the recommender, and in PDF format.

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program requires three letters of recommendation, at least one of which addresses the applicant's readiness to work in the therapeutic setting.

MTEL or copy of current license, as appropriate.

- Additional Requirements for International Students
- Proof of English Proficiency - All applicants whose first language is not English and who have not earned an academic degree in the U.S. must submit proof of English proficiency. This graduate entry requirement to Merrimack College can be demonstrated in any of the following ways:
  - A minimum TOEFL score of 84 on the internet-based test (with a minimum of 21 on the writing subset)
  - A minimum IELTS score of 6.5 with no band below 6.0
  - A minimum PTE Academic score of 56
- Certificate of Finances - This form must be completed by all students who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents who intend to be enrolled full-time at Merrimack College. The form must be accompanied by current (no older than six months) proof of funding for the first year of studies in the form of a notarized bank letter.
- Copy of Passport
- Visa – A Visa needs to be obtained before students start their study in the graduate program

## **Admissions Policies and Processes**

### **Admission Prerequisites**

Some graduate programs may have required prerequisites that will not count toward a degree.

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the prerequisites for their program of interest.

Prerequisite coursework can be taken at any accredited college or university, including Merrimack College.

Prerequisite courses must be completed with a grade B (3.0 GPA) or better prior to enrolling in classes at Merrimack. For questions about prerequisite coursework, please contact [graduate@merrimack.edu](mailto:graduate@merrimack.edu).

### **Admission Review**

Once complete, applications are reviewed by the Graduate Admission Office. The committee reviews undergraduate GPA, course of study and curriculum in addition to relevant job or internship experience, personal or professional accomplishments or demonstrated leadership, letters of recommendation, and an applicant's goals for the program as outlined in their personal statement.

### **Admission Timeline**

Admission to the traditional graduate program is on a rolling basis. Fellowship programs have different application deadlines.

### **Verification of Credentials**

It is the policy of the Office of Graduate Studies to verify all credentials submitted in support of an application. All transcripts, recommendations, publications, standardized test scores, and supplemental materials must be traceable to their source in order to confirm their authenticity. Written materials submitted by an applicant may be subject to review for the purpose of identifying plagiarism.

### **Final Transcripts**

All students must have submitted final transcripts, with proof of bachelor's degree earned, by the end of the first month of the first semester or a registration hold will be placed on the student's account. At that time the student will be prevented from registering for following semesters until proof of degree is received.

Official transcripts should be mailed to:  
Merrimack College  
Office of Graduate Studies A485  
315 Turnpike Street  
North Andover, MA 01845

Students may only apply to one program for any given term. Any additional applications will be automatically denied admission. Only the first submitted application will be considered.

### **Admission Deposit**

Admitted students who wish to accept their offer of admission must submit a deposit. The deposit is non-refundable and will be applied toward the student's tuition bill. The exact deposit amount will be announced in the admission decision letter.

### **Deferment Policy and Process**

If an admitted student would like to defer their admission, the following two items are required:

1. A written request
2. Deposit received

An admission deferral may be requested for one term or one academic year. Students may only defer their admission once. Students who do not matriculate after deferring will need to reapply.

### **Reapplication and Readmission Policy**

Applicants to a graduate program who did not attend or did not complete the program and applicants who have been denied admission must submit a new application to be considered for admission. The new application must include all required documents to be reviewed. All supporting materials must be updated. Deposits for previous applications or enrollments do not count towards new applications or enrollments. If admitted, the applicant must submit a new deposit.

Prospective students who are reapplying and who had previously submitted all documents may use those documents for their new application for up to one calendar year from date of submission.

Prospective students who have been admitted to a term, but who do not deposit for that term, can request in writing to have their application reviewed for the following term without submitting a new application but with no guarantee of admission. This request can only be made once and for only one term.

### **Responding to Offers of Admission**

Prospective students must accept offers of admission by depositing as indicated in the instructions contained in their offer letter.

### **Transfer Credit**

Matriculated graduate students may request to transfer up to two courses (eight credits) for which they have received a grade of B (3.0 GPA) or better. To be eligible for consideration, the credits must have been obtained at another accredited graduate program within a time frame which will allow the student to complete the Merrimack program with all credits falling under the six year time limit, including those accepted in transfer. Only courses that have not been part of another degree program can be proposed for transfer credit. All courses submitted for transfer credit at the time of application must be completed prior to the student's acceptance into the program. All transfer credits must be reviewed and approved in writing by the corresponding graduate program director in order for the credits be used to complete the program. Students must provide official transcripts, course descriptions, and syllabi for review.

### **Admission to Graduate Courses through the GRAD Advantage Program**

The Merrimack GRAD Advantage program allows Merrimack undergraduate students to take up to two graduate degree courses (eight credits) during their senior year, covered by a GRAD Advantage scholarship. Courses cross-listed as graduate/undergraduate courses may be taken for either undergraduate or graduate credit, but not both.

Students in the GRAD Advantage Program wanting to gain graduate credit for a cross-listed course must register for it as a graduate course to gain graduate credit.

Undergraduate students with a 3.0 GPA who meet all the prerequisites can apply to the GRAD Advantage program. To prepare to apply to the program, Merrimack undergraduate students should start working with their academic advisor to plan courses around the program as early as freshman year. To apply, students should return their completed Intent to Pursue Form to the Office of Graduate Studies and complete the online application. All additional application requirements will be waived. Then, a student can take up to two graduate courses (eight credits) during their senior year, if their schedule allows. They can continue in the program as long as they earn a B or better in each of their graduate courses and maintain a 3.0 GPA during their senior undergraduate year.

Even if a student chooses not to take courses through GRAD Advantage as an undergraduate, they are still eligible to take graduate courses covered by the GRAD Advantage scholarship up to one calendar year after they graduate. After one year, however, they must apply through the standard application process, which may not include a scholarship or which may be subject to a different scholarship amount.

*Please note: All Merrimack “fellowship programs” are different and separate from the GRAD Advantage program and have a separate application process and different admission requirements. Fellowships do not qualify for the GRAD Advantage program.*

The Merrimack GRAD Advantage scholarship program covers the cost of two graduate courses (up to eight credits) taken during a student’s senior undergraduate year or in the one-year period following graduation from their undergraduate program. The value of this scholarship varies based on the number of credits each course provides. If it is fully applied to the student’s senior year courses, the scholarship will no longer apply after graduation; if not, it will be prorated and applied to student’s graduate studies based on the student’s credit load. Students will need to inform the Office of Graduate Studies if their credit load changes at any point during the academic year, as this directly impacts their scholarship amount.

*Undergraduate students should take note that they must be enrolled in at least 12 undergraduate credits to remain in Merrimack student housing and to continue to receive undergraduate financial aid. Graduate credits taken through the GRAD Advantage program do not count towards the 12 undergraduate credit total.*

Graduate students enrolled at least half time (a minimum of four credits per semester) in the Grad Advantage program may also qualify for financial aid in the form of Unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loans.

### **Appeal of Admission Denial**

Admission is denied when a prospective student fails to meet the minimum admission requirements of the program to which they have applied. If a student believes there are extenuating circumstances that should be considered, they may appeal the admission decision. Prospective students wishing to appeal a denial can write a letter of appeal to the Office of Graduate Studies.

### **Conditional Admit**

Conditional admission can be awarded to prospective students for certain programs who have met all requirements for admission except for the English language proficiency requirements. Conditionally-admitted applicants must provide updated English language test scores as outlined in their decision letter. Conditionally-admitted students may not take courses or earn credits until they can successfully prove that they meet the Merrimack English language proficiency requirements, at which point they may be fully admitted into the program.

### **Provisional Admit**

Provisionally-admitted students must satisfy the additional requirements outlined in their decision letter before they can be fully admitted to their intended graduate program and matriculate. Once the additional requirements are met, their original application, along with their new grades, will be re-reviewed by the Graduate Admission Committee which will decide on whether the student can be fully admitted.

Provisionally-admitted students should take the following steps to register for classes:

- Contact the program director as indicated in your decision letter in order to determine an appropriate course of action.
- Depending on the program, a provisionally-admitted student may be able to take up to two graduate courses (eight credits) as a non-matriculated graduate student while working towards completing additional requirements.
- Students may take additional required classes at another accredited institution of their choice, but must get prior written permission from the program director prior to registering, as some courses may not be accepted as satisfactory transfer credits. Additionally, only courses with a grade of B (3.0) or better will be accepted.
- Please note that non-matriculated students must check with the Office of Financial Aid to determine their eligibility for financial aid under the provisionally-admitted status.
- Once a student has completed the required classes, they should update the Office of Graduate Studies at [graduate@merrimack.edu](mailto:graduate@merrimack.edu). All transcripts outside of Merrimack College can be mailed to the following address:

Merrimack College Office of Graduate Studies 315 Turnpike Street - A485  
North Andover, MA 01845

### **Non-Matriculated Student Status**

Students can take up to two courses (eight credits) without being accepted into a degree program.

Before registering for a graduate course, non-matriculated students must submit an official transcript to the Office of Graduate Studies indicating the conferral of a bachelor's degree. Please note that international students cannot take courses under the non-matriculated status.

### **Change in Program of Graduate Study**

Admission for graduate study is admission to a specific program. Therefore, a student is not free to change graduate programs at will. Students seeking to change from one graduate program to another need to withdraw from their initial program as well as reapply to the new program. Previous acceptance into one graduate program does not guarantee acceptance into another.

### **Records Maintenance and Disposal**

All admission documents, including academic records sent from other institutions, become part of the official college file. Admission credentials are retained for only 12 months. They are subsequently destroyed if applicants 1) do not register for courses within the period for which the offer of admission is valid; 2) have been denied admission; 3) do not respond to requests for additional information; or 4) fail to submit complete applications, including all official transcripts and test results.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Merrimack College is firmly committed to the practice of equal opportunity. Every student is entitled to an environment free of discrimination, which erodes dignity and morale. The College prohibits discrimination of any kind.

Discrimination constitutes a serious infraction of College policy as well as a violation of state and federal law. Any member of the Merrimack College community who discriminates against, excludes, degrades or otherwise devalues another on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability, or other lawfully protected categories will be disciplined accordingly, up to and including dismissal.

It is the policy of Merrimack College to administer all decisions without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability, or other lawfully protected categories.

# Academic Policies

## Graduate Grading Policies

Although the graduate grading policy is similar to the undergraduate policy, it should be noted that the expectations for graduate students are much higher and therefore the grading is more rigorous. Candidates for any graduate-level degree or certificate must attain a final cumulative grade point average of 3.0 before the degree or certificate will be conferred.

### Letter and Special Grade Definition

The following letter and special grades are used across all graduate programs. Please note that this document sets the minimum standards for the College. Individual degree programs may have stricter GPA and course grade requirements.

- A: "A" indicates outstanding work
- B: "B" means that the work is satisfactory
- C: "C" (2.0) is deemed unsatisfactory at the graduate level. No more than two courses at the C level (2.0 or higher) will be counted as acceptable toward a graduate degree. Students may be permitted to repeat only two courses, and may repeat each course only one time. Those who receive more than two C level grades will be automatically dismissed from their program of study. "See Repeat Policy" to understand how to repeat a course.
- Any grade lower than a C - will not be acceptable for graduate-level work and cannot be counted as credit towards the degree. However, the grade will be counted toward the graduate student's GPA. If a student receives a grade lower than a C in a required course, the student will be required to retake the course. A course may only be retaken one time. The most recent grade will replace the first grade and will be factored in to the student's GPA.
- N: "N" indicates an incomplete course as the result of failure to complete all coursework within the timeframe of the course. With the approval of the course instructor, the student may be allowed up to four weeks from the end of the term to finish their work. Upon completion, the grade will be converted. If the instructor has not informed the Registrar of a new grade by the end of the four week period, an "N" will convert to an "F" (See Incomplete Grade).
- H: "H" indicates that the student has audited the course and therefore will not have completed any coursework and will not receive a grade
- W: "W" means that the student has withdrawn from the course or the college
- Pass/Fail courses are not permissible.

### Grade Points

While grading policies may differ across programs, the calculation of academic averages for all scholastic purposes and points for each credit hour are assigned as follows:

A	4.0	A-	3.7	B+	3.3
B	3.0	B-	2.7	C+	2.3
C	2.0	C-	1.7	F	0.0

### Course Listing on Graduate Transcript

The graduate transcript will list all graduate courses attempted as well as completed, including repeated courses. The transcript will include a record of every graduate course taken and the letter grade received. When a course is repeated, the most recent grade earned is the one used to calculate a student's grade point average. Undergraduate courses taken to fulfill prerequisites before or during matriculation in a graduate program will be listed on the undergraduate transcript and will not be calculated in the student's GPA average for the graduate degree nor will the credits be counted towards the degree.

### Incomplete Grade

Occasionally, extenuating circumstances lead to an inability to complete a course successfully during the regularly scheduled time in which it is offered. At the discretion of the instructor for the course, students may be able to take an incomplete, and complete the course after the semester has ended. An incomplete is not used to extend the time

for completion of general course requirements, but is restricted to the completion of a limited requirement, such as a final examination or paper. (See “N” grade above)

### **Repeat Policy**

Graduate students may be permitted to repeat only two courses that were taken at Merrimack College for graduate credit (i.e., applied towards a graduate degree) and may only repeat each course once. Before registering to retake a course, students must get the written approval of their program director. Both grades will appear on the transcript, but only the most recent grade, whether it is higher or lower than the original grade, will be used to calculate the student’s graduate GPA. All repeated courses must be taken at Merrimack College.

### **Change of Grade**

If the student thinks that the grading criteria were not properly applied or the grade is inaccurate, the student must first appeal directly to the course instructor as soon as possible, but within seven days at the latest of receiving the disputed grade either in person or through computer mediated means (e.g. email, and uploading the grade to the course management system). If the instructor agrees to a change in grade, the instructor must submit a “Grade Change” form to the Registrar’s Office. The form must be dated and signed by the instructor as well as the dean of the school through which the student’s program of study is offered.

If, after that consultation, the instructor does not agree to change the grade and the student still wishes to appeal further, they must follow the grade appeal process described in Appendix K of the Faculty Handbook (AAUP Policy on The Assignment of Course Grades and Student Appeals).

### **Grade Appeal**

(from Appendix K in the Faculty Handbook)

1. A student who wishes to complain about a grade would be expected to discuss the matter first with the course instructor, doing so as soon as possible after receiving the grade.
2. The instructor should be willing to listen, to provide explanation, and to be receptive to changing the grade if the student provides convincing argument for doing so. (In most cases the discussion between the student and the instructor should suffice and the matter should not need to be carried further.)
3. If, after the discussion with the instructor, the student’s concerns remain unresolved, the student might then approach the instructor’s department chair or another member of the faculty who is the instructor’s immediate administrative superior. That person, if he or she believes that the complaint may have merit, would be expected to discuss it with the instructor. If the matter still remains unresolved, it should be referred to an ad hoc faculty committee.
4. The ad hoc committee would ordinarily be composed of faculty members in the instructor’s department or in closely allied fields. The committee would examine available written information on the dispute, would be available for meetings with the student and with the instructor, and would meet with others as it sees fit.
5. If the faculty committee, through its inquiries and deliberations, determines that compelling reasons exist to change the grade, it would request that the instructor make the change, providing the instructor with a written explanation of its reasons. Should the instructor decline, he or she should provide an explanation for refusing.
6. The faculty committee, after considering the instructor’s explanation, and upon concluding that it would be unjust to allow the original grade to stand, may then recommend to the department head or to the instructor’s immediate administrative superior that the grade be changed. That individual will provide the instructor with a copy of the recommendation and will ask the instructor to implement it. If the instructor continues to decline, that individual may then change the grade, notifying the instructor and the student of this action. Only that individual, upon the written recommendation of the faculty committee, should have the authority to effect a change in grade over the objection of the instructor who assigned the original grade.

## **Academic Standards**

### **Full-time Status**

A graduate student is considered a full-time student when enrolled in eight or more credits in a single term.

### **Part-time Status**

A graduate student is considered a part-time student when enrolled in fewer than eight credits in a single term.

### **Good Standing**

The necessary grade point average (GPA) for a student to be considered in good standing for all graduate programs is a 3.0. In addition, all students must have all bills paid and immunizations up to date in order to continue in good standing. Graduate students must meet this minimum GPA in order to have the degree conferred and to graduate. The director of each graduate program monitors minimum program cumulative GPA, and failure to meet this requirement in any term will result in the student being placed on probation. (See Probation below.)

### **Probation**

Students who fall below a cumulative GPA of 3.0 at the end of any given term will be notified in writing that they have been placed on probation. A copy of the notification will also be sent to their dean, to the Office of Graduate Studies, the Office of Financial Aid, and the Registrar's Office. Students who have been placed on academic probation must meet with their program director to develop a written "Academic Improvement Plan" which specifies how the student will address whatever issues have led to the decline in GPA; the plan must be signed by both the student and the program director. Students who are not in a one-year program must bring their GPA up to 3.0 by the end of the second term after the term in which their GPA has fallen below 3.0 and they have been placed on probation. At the end of the first term after being placed on probation, the student must achieve at least a 2.5 GPA; at the end of the second term after being placed on probation, the student must achieve the 3.0. Thus, if at the end of the first term following probation a student has not yet achieved a 3.0 cumulative GPA but has obtained minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5, the student may remain on probation for one additional term. If the student does not achieve a 2.5 GPA by the end of the first term following probation, the student will be dismissed (see below). If at the end of the second term following probation the student does not achieve a 3.0 GPA, the student will be dismissed. Being on probation may affect the status of a student's fellowship, internship, or assistantship. It may also affect a student's financial aid eligibility. Students in one year programs who fall below a 3.0 are allowed only one term on probation to bring their GPA up to 3.0 given the accelerated nature of their program. Students on probation can take up to 16 credits during the semester they are on probation.

### **Low Grade in Required Courses**

If a graduate student receives lower than a C (2.0 GPA) in a course that is required by their program, they must retake the course. If the student receives a C (2.0 GPA) or lower for a second time in that course, they will be required to meet with their academic advisor and will be placed on academic probation.

### **Academic Dismissal**

If a student's cumulative GPA is below a 2.5 in the term following the assignment of academic probation, the student will automatically be dismissed. A student who has continued on probation for two consecutive terms during which the student is enrolled in classes, but who does not attain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 at the end of the second term of enrollment after the institution of the probationary period, will be automatically dismissed. Students may also be dismissed under the academic integrity policy (see below).

### **Readmission after Academic Dismissal**

A student who is dismissed for failing to remain in academic good standing may apply for readmission at the earliest after the lapse of one term and at the latest after four consecutive terms. To be readmitted, the student must present a petition to the program director explaining in detail how the causes of low achievement have been corrected and what plans are in place to ensure future academic success. The program director will convene an academic board of representatives including at least two additional members from the school in which the program is housed to review the appeal; interdisciplinary program appeals will be reviewed by an interdisciplinary committee. A student may be dismissed and readmitted only one time. A second dismissal may not be appealed.



**Time Limits/Statute of Limitations**

Degree candidates must fulfill all the requirements for the graduate degree within six consecutive years of the date of matriculation, unless their program specifies a more restrictive time limit. This time limit ensures that the degree conferred represents a well-sequenced, cohesive body of current knowledge. All the program requirements, including coursework, transfer credits, independent studies, and internships must be completed within the six-year time limit. Exceptions may be requested for cases in which the progress to degree is interrupted by circumstances that are beyond control of the student by written appeal to the program director explaining and documenting the circumstances. Final approval of any exception rests with the dean of the school through which the program is offered.

**Withdrawal from the Program**

Withdrawal is initiated by the student (except as noted below), usually in consultation with their academic advisor. Students may not withdraw simply because of low grades. Withdrawal from the program implies withdrawal from all courses, and the graduate regulations concerning grades are applicable. Mere non-attendance does not constitute official withdrawal from the program. It is necessary to complete an official withdrawal form and file it with the Registrar. These forms are available from the program director.

**Non-Attendance**

Matriculated students who have not enrolled in two consecutive terms in which they take at least four credits each term will be automatically withdrawn from the program without notice; while they may appeal to the program director in writing to be re-activated, depending on circumstances, they may be required to reapply with no guarantee of admission.

International students must adhere to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) regulations regarding taking time off and should consult with the Office of International Programs with any questions.

**Leave of Absence**

A leave of absence is a period during which the student maintains their status (i.e., is still considered active in the program), but is entitled to none of the services of the College that are provided in return for the payment of tuition or fees. An application for a leave of absence may be filed at any time during the academic year for the following term(s). A leave of absence may begin during a term, provided the completed application for leave is filed with the program director before the end of the fourth class session. In this case, the entire term is counted toward the leave. No refund of tuition will be given except as provided by other existing regulations.

The total leave allowed a student during his/her graduate program is two semesters which need not be taken consecutively. Students desiring a leave of absence must complete a "Leave of Absence" form available from the appropriate program director to complete arrangements for a leave. A date of return will be agreed upon in advance and stated on the Leave of Absence form. A student who fails to return on the agreed date will be considered to have withdrawn from the College.

A leave of absence may be granted to any student complying with the College regulations. Such a leave of absence will be revoked if the student incurs an academic dismissal subsequent to the granting of the leave. Students on leave are fully responsible for returning on the agreed date. No reminders will be sent to the student. A leave of absence does not waive the mandatory six-year time limit requirement. That is, all students requesting a leave of absence still must complete their program within six years of the date of matriculation.

International students must adhere to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) regulations regarding taking time off and should consult with the Office of International Programs with any questions.

**Commencement Participation**

Students who have completed all degree requirements for their program may participate in the College's annual Commencement exercises. Diplomas will be awarded if and when the student has been certified by their program director as having completed all academic requirements and has been certified by the Bursar as having met all financial obligations to the College.

Students who have not satisfactorily completed all academic requirements for graduation at the time of Commencement may participate in the ceremony if they meet or exceed the criteria described below; however, they will receive a blank diploma. They may also opt out, and choose to participate at a subsequent Commencement. Requirements for participation in Commencement are not subject to appeal.

Determination of eligibility occurs at the end of the drop/add period in the final academic term preceding Commencement. At that time, the Registrar will calculate each student's expected credit total, which is the number of credits earned plus the number for which the student is registered at that time. A student may participate in Commencement if their expected total is no more than 8 credits less than the minimum requirement for their degree program. For example, a student in a graduate degree program requiring 36 credits may participate if their expected total is at least 28 credits.

In all cases, the credit count will be based on the official record in the Registrar's Office. Students with pending transfer credits are responsible for ensuring that those credits have been recorded by the Registrar's Office by 5:00 pm on the Friday nearest February 15.

### **Conferring of Degrees**

Degrees are conferred three times per year: late May, August 31, and December 31. Diplomas are mailed within the following month.

Individuals who wish to submit verification of degree completion to employers or to graduate schools during the period between the end of their final grading period and the conferring of degrees may obtain a letter of completion from the Registrar's Office.

### **Replacement Diplomas**

Replacement diplomas may be ordered through the Registrar's Office for an additional fee.

## **Additional Academic Policies**

### **Academic Advising**

Each graduate student should consult with their program director before enrolling in courses to ensure that their course of study aligns with program requirements.

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance in all courses is required. The course instructor will establish the specific attendance policy for each course.

### **Drop/Add Courses Policy**

The Graduate Academic calendar, posted on the Registrar's Office web page and in the Registrar's Office, lists the precise date for the end of the "drop/add period" for each term. To formally drop a course during this period, the student must do so through MyMack, Merrimack College's online resource portal at <https://mymack.merrimack.edu/ics>. Courses dropped in the regular drop/add period will not appear on the student's permanent record or transcript. Students who fail to officially drop a course will remain enrolled and be required to pay tuition and applicable fees. In addition, students who fail to officially drop a course and who cease to attend classes will receive an "F" on the official transcript. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that his or her schedule is accurate.

### **Auditing a Course**

With the written approval of both the program director and the course instructor, a graduate student may register for a course on an audit basis. No examinations or assignments are required, no grade is assigned, and no credit is granted for course completion. If they wish to take tests or the final examination or complete assignments for no credit and no grade, they may do so only with permission of the instructor. Under no circumstance can a course taken on an audit basis be assigned credit at a later date. Audited courses do not count toward federal financial aid eligibility.

Students may, with the written permission of both the course instructor and the program coordinator, make a change in registration from audit to credit or credit to audit during the drop/add period. Please check Merrimack College's website to see the current fee for auditing a course.

### **Requesting Transcripts**

Students may visit <https://iwantmytranscript.com/merrimack> to request an official transcript.

There is a fee for requesting a transcript. Please contact the Office of the Registrar with any questions or concerns.

### **Credit Hour Policy and Course Type Definitions**

Merrimack College's policy on credit hours relies on federal regulation, which defines a credit hour as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates not less than:

- One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or 10 to 12 weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- At least an equivalent amount of work as required in the above paragraph for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

### ***Standard 15-Week Term Courses***

One credit hour is constituted by a minimum of one hour of classroom or direct instruction plus a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for a term (or its equivalent). Utilizing the Carnegie Unit, "one hour" of instruction or class work equals 50 minutes; a term is defined as not less than 15 weeks. An equivalent amount of student work (minimum three hours per week for a term of combined direct instruction and out-of-class student work) must be represented for a credit hour in other academic activities such as laboratories, internships, practicums, studio work and other academic work.

### **Courses Meeting Fewer than 15 Weeks and Blended Delivery Courses**

- The credit hours awarded for a course must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of three hours of combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week term. The hours of direct instruction and out-of-class student work may consist of course activities including, but not limited to:
  - Face-to-face course meetings
  - Time to read assigned texts or other assigned materials
  - Virtual course meetings, student-instructor, or student-student interactions
  - Experiential learning activities consistent with the learning objectives of the course, such as service learning projects, research with faculty, or practicum placements
  - Synthesis/processing/reflection time and activities (may be used for writing or production of creative work which may take many forms, including but not limited to journals, formal papers, blogs, art, music, etc.)

Assigned activities should reflect a reasonable expectation by the instructor of the time it would take to meet the learning objectives of the course or assignment.

### ***Blended Course Definition***

24-74% of course work is done via distance education in which instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication or equivalent mechanisms, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other.

### ***Distance Learning Courses***

The credit hours awarded for a course must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of three hours of combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week term.

### ***Distance Learning Course Definition***

All or the vast majority (75% or more) of the instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication or equivalent mechanisms, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other. The academic unit sponsoring the course or program will use this definition to determine if the course is a distance learning course.

### ***Independent or Directed Study Courses***

The credit hours awarded for a course must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of three hours of combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week term. Independent Study courses are often offered as variable credit hours, generally 1 to 4 credits. Specific independent study guidelines are provided at the School/College in which the course is housed; however, in general, they should have content that is unique from other approved courses in the curriculum and be taught in individualized or small group sessions guided by a faculty member (face-to-face or via distance/on-line). A directed study must be developed in consultation with the faculty member who will supervise the work and then must be approved by the program director and submitted to the Registrar's Office.

The hours of direct instruction and out-of-class student work may consist of course activities including, but not limited to:

- Time spent on course-related reading or other content delivery media
- Substantive face-to-face or virtual student-instructor interaction
- Writing assignments or other forms of learning assessments
- Experiential education activities

### ***Internships /Practicums***

The credit hours awarded for a course must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of three hours of combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week term. Specific internship guidelines are provided at the School/College in which the course is housed.

### **Field-based Experiences: Graduate Fellowships, Assistantships, Internships, and Practicums**

Some programs offer fellowships, assistantships, internships, or practicums. Fellowships, assistantships, and internships may offer some sort of financial aid or reimbursement.

### ***Practicum***

A practicum is a graduate-level course, often in a specialized field of study, which is designed to give students supervised practical training in the application of a previously- or concurrently- studied theory. Practicums are common for students in education and social work programs to fulfill requirements for licensure.

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research**

(from Appendix H in the Faculty Handbook – see Appendix for full description and role of IRB)

The mission of the Merrimack College Institutional Review Board (IRB) is to safeguard the rights and well-being of human subjects in projects conducted at or sponsored by Merrimack College.

### **Jurisdiction of Merrimack College's Institutional Review Board:**

All College sponsored projects involving research with "human subjects" are within the jurisdiction of Merrimack College's Institutional Review Board.

### **Institutional Review Board Responsibilities:**

The specific responsibilities of the Merrimack College IRB include:

1. *Developing and disseminating federally-compliant policies for the protection of human subjects.*
2. *Developing and implementing institutionally-appropriate procedures for ensuring the protection of human subjects, in collaboration with other members of the Merrimack College community.*

3. *Educating members of the Merrimack College community about the ethical and legal obligations associated with human subject projects.*
4. *Conducting reviews of generalizable research projects to ensure that such research will be carried out in a manner which safeguards the rights and well-being of the subjects.*
5. *Promoting professional development in research ethics for Merrimack College employees in support of their instructional, research and administrative work.*

### **Professional Standards**

Graduate students participating in field-based experiences through Merrimack College are required not only to maintain satisfactory academic progress, but also to meet appropriate professional standards as well. The student's performance and progress at the field site will be monitored by the program director or a faculty member within their program. If the student fails to meet satisfactory professional standards set by the program, they will be at risk of being dismissed from their placement, as well as losing any financial aid that accompanies it. Depending on the circumstances, dismissal from the placement may also entail dismissal from the program.

Fellows/assistants/interns are retained only if they are doing acceptable work, maintaining academic good standing (overall 3.0 GPA), making progress towards their degrees, and meeting their obligations to their departments and to the College in an acceptable manner. The student shall be informed in writing that there is danger of termination as soon as it becomes evident that their performance is unsatisfactory. The warning letter will:

- Outline the fellow's/assistant's/intern's deficiencies;
- Suggest required remedies;
- Set a date by which the matter will be reviewed and a determination made of whether there has been sufficient improvement or whether the program will recommend dismissal to the Office of Graduate Studies.

In serious cases, a field experience may be terminated effective immediately. In these cases, the department is not obligated to use the above warning procedure. The program director may immediately suspend any/all duties of the fellow/assistant/intern pending the program director's decision regarding termination. Serious cases include, but are not limited to, violations of college policy/procedures and violations of ethical or professional codes or standards. Termination appeals may be made in writing first to the student's program director then to the dean of the appropriate school. All financial support ends on the date of termination.

## **Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures**

### **Academic Integrity Code**

(adapted from the academic integrity policies and procedures of Villanova University) [9-28-11]

The academic purpose of attending college is to pursue knowledge and truth, a purpose wholeheartedly embraced by St. Augustine in his own intellectual life. The collegial pursuit of knowledge and truth depends on cooperation and trust between student and teacher, among students, and between the student and the college. This pursuit involves learning methods of research and writing whereby such knowledge and truth are both learned and subsequently conveyed through competencies and skills acquired through academic study.

Academic integrity is fundamental to creating and maintaining an atmosphere of cooperation and trust. It is thus a concern for everyone in the college community. The academic integrity code below is designed to help students understand what is not permissible in their academic and intellectual lives at the college. It seeks to protect students from unintentional acts of dishonesty and to preserve the trust inherent in the student-teacher relationship, which is compromised if suspicion arises regarding the integrity of a student's work. The code is also designed to inform students of the rules which will be used to judge academic integrity infractions.

### **Academic Integrity Code**

In the broadest sense, academic dishonesty results from any attempt to gain an unfair advantage over others. The following definitions and examples are meant to guide you as students in the matter of avoiding academic

dishonesty in your studies at the college. The code is also designed to inform you of the rules which will be used to judge academic integrity infractions.

### **Cheating**

While taking a test, quiz, or examination, you must rely on your own mastery of the subject and not attempt to receive help in any way not explicitly approved by the instructor. For example, students cannot use books, notes, study aids, assistance from electronic devices, or another's work without the instructor's permission.

Trying to take someone else's examination or trying to have someone else take your own examination is prohibited, as is lying about a class absence or about the need for an extension on a paper or exam, claiming that an exam or paper has been submitted but lost by the instructor, or changing exam answers after the exam has been returned. Obtaining, in advance, specific questions on any test, quiz, or examination not authorized by the instructor is likewise prohibited. Similarly, purchasing a term paper or copying another student's work and submitting it in whole or in part as your own are prohibited and constitute plagiarism (see below).

Team or collaborative projects, however, where students are told by their instructor to work together and the submission represents joint effort, are permissible.

### **Fabrication**

You must not falsify, invent, alter, or use in a deliberately misleading way any information, data, or citations in any assignment. For example, making up or changing data or results or relying on someone else's results in an experiment or lab assignment is prohibited, as is citing sources that either don't exist or have not been actually used or consulted.

### **Complicity**

You must not help or attempt to help another student commit an act of academic dishonesty as, for example, allowing another student to cheat from your exam or assignment or helping another student on a take-home exam. This prohibition does not apply to team projects where students are directed by their instructor to work together.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is intellectual theft. At Merrimack, the failure to acknowledge the intellectual contributions of others is considered plagiarism. It is important to avoid even unintentional plagiarism by being familiar with accepted ways to acknowledge sources and by developing good note-taking and research habits. The explanations and examples below are designed to help you avoid plagiarism.

The most common way to acknowledge the reliance or indebtedness to someone else's work is to provide footnotes, end-notes, in-text citations, or other documentation. Commonplace knowledge such as well-known dates, proverbs, or colloquial expressions seldom require documentation, but you should consult your instructor or cite the source if you are in doubt. In general, the harder it would be for someone to find the fact you have mentioned, the more likely you need to acknowledge its source. It is your responsibility to show clearly when and where you are relying on others, in part because your readers may wish to learn from the same sources you have used.

Since the internet has made information so readily available and the indebtedness of students to sources of many kinds raises issues of how best to handle sources, the following instructions are meant to be helpful in avoiding plagiarism. They are not, however, a substitute for instructions from your particular teachers.

It's plagiarism if you use someone else's words without acknowledgement. If you use someone else's words, not only must you give the source, but you must also put these words in quotation marks or use some other appropriate means of indicating that the words are not your own. This requirement applies to spoken as well as written words and mathematical formulations, whether or not they have been formally published.

It's plagiarism if you use someone else's ideas, facts, data, or arguments without acknowledgement, even if the words you use are your own. If you use someone else's examples, reasoning, or experimental results, you must acknowledge that use. Paraphrasing, summarizing, or rearranging someone else's words, ideas, or results does not alter your indebtedness to the source, which must be acknowledged.

It is plagiarism if you acknowledge someone in a way that will lead a reader or listener to think your indebtedness is less than it actually was. If you use a whole paragraph worth of ideas from a source and include as your final sentence a quotation from that source, for example, you must indicate that your indebtedness includes more than just the quotation. If you simply put a page number after the quotation, you will lead your reader to think that only the quotation comes from the source. Instead, make clear that you have used more than the quotation.

Since online information is so readily available and cut-and-paste procedures are so easy to use, you must understand and use accepted techniques for citing internet sources and must be particularly on guard not to claim authorship of any idea or words of another. Since many internet sources do not include an author's name, it is easy to assume that the work is part of the public domain and may be used without acknowledgement. This is not the case. All work taken from another must be acknowledged. The same rules apply to citing internet sources as apply to citing print sources, but the form of the citations may differ. Information on how and when to properly cite sources is available from your instructor. You can also seek help from staff in McQuade Library or visit the library's webpage: "How to Cite Sources." Help is also available at the Writing Center located in McQuade Library.

The words or ideas of a roommate or tutor or of an encyclopedia, or notes from another class all require acknowledgement. Introductions and notes from books also require acknowledgement. Speak with your instructor about the best way to handle such acknowledgements for your particular class.

It's still plagiarism if you use unacknowledged material accidentally or even unintentionally. Avoiding plagiarism begins with good note-taking, research, and essay-drafting habits. Take careful notes on sources, keeping track of these sources throughout the various stages of the writing process. Notes should identify the information you have obtained and where you acquired it so that later you can acknowledge your indebtedness accurately. A paper can be plagiarized even if you have simply forgotten that you used a certain source, or even if you have included material accidentally without remembering that it was taken from another source. One of the most common problems is that students write a draft of a paper without proper documentation, intending to go back later to "put in the references." In some cases students accidentally hand in such papers instead of the documented version, or they forget to include some citations in their final draft. The fact that the wrong draft was submitted is not a defense against an accusation of plagiarism. In general students are held accountable for the work that they actually hand in, rather than the work they intended to hand in.

### **Appropriation**

You must acknowledge the original source when using or incorporating an existing work into the production of a new work for a variety of purposes such as creating parody, offering commentary, or extending meaning and/or expression through a new context for the original work. Appropriation is particularly relevant to the fine arts. It is an expressive option that requires attention to legal and historical practice and responsibility since copyright and other laws may be involved. You should acknowledge the original source(s) according to your instructor's guidelines.

### **Multiple Submissions**

You must not submit academic work for a class which has been done for another class unless your instructor gives prior approval. In any assignment, an instructor is justified in expecting that a certain kind of learning will be taking place. Handing in something done previously may preclude this learning.

### **Unsanctioned Collaboration**

When doing out-of-class projects or assignments, you must work individually unless collaboration has been expressly encouraged or permitted by your instructor. In many disciplines, collaboration is considered not simply a vital tool for learning, but more importantly, one of the primary means for generating knowledge. Thus it is expected, encouraged, and in some cases mandatory that students collaborate with each other, with faculty, and with tutors as they complete their assignments. You should follow your instructor's guidelines with respect to whether and what kind of collaboration is permissible with regard to an assignment or project. You should follow your instructor's guidelines with respect to seeking the help of tutors for a graded assignment and to the manner of the acknowledgement of such help. If you are in doubt as to whether collaboration is acceptable, you should assume that you are expected to do your work independently unless cooperation is specifically authorized by the instructor. When in doubt, ask your instructor.

# Penalties for Academic Dishonesty

## Individual Course Penalty

The academic course penalty will be determined by your instructor. A student who violates the academic integrity code in a course may receive an F for the course, or, at the discretion of the instructor, a less severe penalty. If you withdraw from any course in which you have been accused of an academic integrity violation for which the penalty is F for the course, the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs will record the grade of WF on your transcript.

## College Penalty

If the course penalty results in failure for the course, you will be referred to the instructor's academic dean. The severity of the violation may, in the judgment of the dean and upon the recommendation of the instructor, require an additional college penalty beyond failure for the course. A college penalty may result in such actions as suspension or expulsion from the college. Your academic dean will be notified of the action. If not expelled from the college, you must complete an educational program devised by the office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs and supervised by your academic dean, to help you come to a fuller understanding of the academic integrity code. If you fail to complete the educational program to the satisfaction of your dean, and within the timelines specified by your dean, a hold will be placed on your transcript until the program has been completed.

## Right of Appeal

If you acknowledge the integrity infraction but believe that the course grade penalty is inappropriate, you may appeal the grade through the normal college procedure for resolving grade disputes. Your instructor can inform you of the process as can your academic advisor or your academic dean. If you acknowledge the integrity infraction but believe the college penalty, if one has been imposed by the instructor's dean, is inappropriate, you may appeal the dean's penalty to the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA). All college penalty decisions are reviewed by the Provost / VPAA. If you believe that you have not committed an integrity infraction, your instructor or your instructor's dean will refer your case to the Academic Integrity Board (AIB). You may also appeal directly to the AIB. If you withdraw from the college before your appeal is completed, the Provost / VPAA will enter the grade of WF on your transcript for the course and any reapplication for admission to the college may be denied. Academic Integrity Review Procedures

These procedures cover all cases where students are alleged to have committed infractions of the academic integrity code. Materials on academic integrity violations will be considered an internal and confidential record. These materials will be retained in the files of the Provost / VPAA until the student graduates or withdraws from the college. At that point, the files will be removed and destroyed.

Note: All references to "dean" in the following procedures are to the instructor's academic dean unless otherwise indicated.

## Reporting the Violation

The Academic Integrity Code helps students understand what is permissible and what is not regarding academic course conduct. Any additional requirements an instructor seeks to impose must be specifically published and accessible to students on either an instructor's course syllabus and/or course website.

1. If an instructor believes that a student has violated the academic integrity code, the instructor will, under normal circumstances, notify the student, allowing the student an opportunity to respond. Depending on the circumstances, the instructor may choose to notify the student orally or in writing. At his or her sole discretion, the instructor may take a variety of actions, including taking no action, requiring the student to redo the work or complete an alternative piece of work, giving the student a failing grade for the assignment in question, or giving the student a failing grade for the course, which requires written notification to the student.
2. When an instructor assigns as penalty a failing grade for the course, the instructor must also report the matter in writing to the instructor's department chair. If the department chair has questions, the chair may refer the matter back to the instructor for further discussion or clarification. Unless the instructor wishes to withdraw the action, the department chair will report the matter to the dean. The dean will notify the



Provost /VPAA's office of the instructor's action. If the dean decides to impose a college penalty, then such a penalty can include suspension or expulsion from the college. The dean may request further consultation with the instructor, the department chair, or the student before imposing such a penalty

3. Students who believe an academic integrity violation by others has occurred should report the suspected violation to the instructor. If the instructor does not act on the report, students may also report the matter to the instructor's department chair, the instructor's academic dean, or to their own academic dean who will report the complaint to the instructor's academic dean. The instructor's department chair or academic dean will investigate and determine how to proceed.

## Appeals

### 1. Appealing the Course Grade Penalty

If a student believes the course grade penalty imposed by the instructor is inappropriate, the student can appeal the course grade through the normal college procedure for resolving grade disputes (see Appendix K of the Faculty Handbook).

### 2. Appealing the College Penalty

If a student believes the college penalty imposed by the dean is inappropriate, the student may appeal the college penalty to the Provost / Academic Vice President.

### 3. Appealing the Allegation

If a student denies that an academic integrity violation has occurred, the dean will refer the matter to the Academic Integrity Board (AIB). A student may also appeal directly to the AIB.

Upon receiving notice from the dean that an alleged academic integrity violation has occurred and the student(s) involved have denied the allegation, the Provost / VPAA will direct the Chair of the AIB to assemble a hearing panel consisting of faculty and student members of the AIB (see "Composition and Procedures of the Academic Integrity Board" in Appendix A). If several students are involved in one case, the dean may request that the panel consider the situation of all involved students, even if one or more do not deny having committed an academic integrity offense. The panel will make a determination regarding whether academic dishonesty has occurred and convey its findings to the dean, who will advise the student and the instructor of their rights of appeal.

The sole purpose of the hearing panel is to determine whether an academic integrity violation has occurred.

If the hearing panel determines that a violation has occurred, the original action of the instructor will stand, subject to decision on any appeal of the board's findings (see #4 below, "Appealing the Findings of the Academic Integrity Board"). The Chair of the AIB will notify in writing at the same time the instructor's academic dean and all parties of the hearing panel's findings. If the student believes, nonetheless, that the instructor's action is inappropriate, the student may appeal the grade through the normal college procedure for resolving grade disputes. The grade appeal process will only consider the grade and not reconsider or review the decision that an academic integrity violation has occurred.

If the hearing panel determines that a violation has occurred, the dean may impose on the student a college penalty. If, in the dean's judgment, there are no extenuating or mitigating circumstances and the penalty for the academic integrity violation assigned is expulsion from the college, the dismissal and the reason for the dismissal may be noted on the student's transcript. If the hearing panel determines that a violation has NOT occurred, the Chair of the AIB notifies in writing the instructor's dean and all parties, at the same time, of the hearing panel's findings. The instructor's department chair will then request that the instructor re-grade the student's work based on the premise that no violation has occurred. If the instructor refuses, the instructor's department chair will follow the normal college procedure for resolving grade disputes to resolve the matter.

### 4. Appealing the Findings of the Academic Integrity Board

Findings of the hearing panel of the Academic Integrity Board (AIB) can be appealed in writing to the dean by either the student(s) or the instructor within five (5) business days. There are only two grounds for an

appeal: (1) there was a material procedural error in the panel's review of the case; (2) new evidence not reasonably available to the panel at the time of its deliberations has come to light.

After reviewing the records of the hearing panel, written materials submitted with the request for an appeal of the panel's findings, and the results of any further consultations with the parties, the dean may either affirm the finding of the hearing panel or remand the case to the hearing panel on the basis of either or both grounds for appeal.

If the case is remanded to the hearing panel, the panel will review and correct any substantiated violation of procedure and examine any new evidence; it will once again forward its findings to the dean. At this point, the dean will review the findings to be sure the grounds for the appeal of the hearing panel's original findings have been addressed. If so, the findings of the board will stand.

### **Required Educational Program**

Once the determination has been made that an academic integrity violation has occurred, either by admission of the student(s) or findings of the hearing panel of the Academic Integrity Board (AIB) and the penalty is not expulsion from the college, the student's academic dean, in consultation with the AIB Chair, will require the student to complete a program of education and reflection on the meaning and importance of academic integrity. This program will be designed by the office of the Provost / VPAA and may include written exercises, community service, and/or participation in an integrity educational program supervised by the college.

If the educational program is not completed in a timely and satisfactory manner as determined by the student's academic dean, the student's dean will impose a hold on the student's academic records, thus preventing the student from registering for further courses, transferring coursework to another institution, or graduating until the conditions of the educational program have been met.

## **Appendix A**

### **Composition and Procedures of the Academic Integrity Board**

The Academic Integrity Board (AIB) is the appeals mechanism for allegations of academic integrity code violations. It consists of faculty members and students. From its ranks come the members of a hearing panel for any case of alleged academic dishonesty. The sole purpose of the hearing panel is to determine whether an academic integrity violation has occurred. The hearing process is an internal community-based procedure governed by the policies of Merrimack College and is limited to members of the Merrimack College community as defined below. Membership

The Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) will constitute the membership of the AIB according to the requirements below. Except for the Chair of the AIB, who is a member of the Provost/VPAA's staff, AIB members will normally serve three-year terms to provide experience and continuity to the hearing panels.

1. A Chair of the AIB from the Provost / VPAA's office who will have faculty status, as defined in the Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws. The job of the Chair will be to oversee the academic integrity policy at the college, including insuring that incoming students are aware of the code, that the code is widely disseminated and regularly communicated, working with faculty and academic support staff in devising ways that promote and support academic integrity, devising an educational program to aid understanding of academic integrity by students who have violated the code, and overseeing all procedures of the AIB, including the training of board members on issues such as conflicts of interest, the importance of confidentiality, and how to assess evidence.
2. At least five (5) fulltime faculty with at least one faculty person from each of the college's disciplinary divisions (business, humanities, science and engineering, social science) chosen by the Faculty Senate. The faculty will normally serve for three-year terms.
3. At least four (4) graduate students chosen by the Graduate Student Government Association drawn from each of the college's Schools. Students will serve for the duration of their tenure at the college.

If a vacancy in the board occurs, the Provost / VPAA will ask the Faculty Senate and/or the Graduate Student Government Association to fill the respective vacancy.

### **The Hearing Panel**

A hearing panel will be formed from the membership of the AIB to hear cases involving an alleged breach of the academic integrity code. A new panel for each case will be formed by the Chair of the AIB on the basis of availability and impartiality. A panel will consist of six (6) members from the following AIB membership categories: the Chair of the AIB, who will be a non-voting member, who will provide continuity among the various hearing panels, convene and preside over the proceedings, and assure compliance with the requirements of reviewing the complaint at all levels including the hearing process; one faculty member, preferably from the school of the course involved in the alleged violation; two (2) other faculty members, preferably one from the student's school if different from that of the course instructor; two (2) students.

### **The Hearing Panel Review Process**

1. When a case is referred to the AIB, the Provost / VPAA's office will ask the Chair of the AIB to convene a hearing panel to determine if a violation has occurred. Normally the panel will be convened within thirty (30) days of receipt of notification. If the violation occurred prior to the final exam in the course, the hearing panel will, if possible, be convened prior to the scheduled time of the final exam. If the violation is reported during the examination period or between semesters, the hearing panel will, if possible, be convened within thirty (30) days after the beginning of the next fall or spring semester.
2. The Chair of the AIB will inform in writing the student(s), the instructor, the instructor's department chair or Program Director, the instructor's dean and the student's dean (and, if appropriate, any additional or other complainant) of the time, place, and membership of the hearing panel. The AIB Chair will do so within a reasonable time to permit adequate preparation for the hearing. The hearing will not be delayed if a student cannot be reached for lack of a correct address in the college's student record system. If the student fails to appear for the hearing, the hearing panel will make its judgment on the basis of the evidence presented at the hearing, and the student will forfeit any right to a further hearing or appeal.
3. Members of the hearing panel will disqualify themselves from hearing a case if they feel there is a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest. A disqualified member will be replaced by another member of the same membership category, if possible (see "The Hearing Panel" above for the definition of categories). If another member of the same membership category is not available, the Chair of the AIB will select another member of the AIB to fill the vacancy. In no case, however, will the number of students on the hearing panel exceed two. If the AIB Chair cannot perform the responsibilities of chairing the hearing panel either because there is a real or perceived conflict of interest or other special circumstance that prevents it, then the Provost / VPAA will provide a person to serve as hearing panel chair, preferably a past or present member of the AIB. An accused student or a complainant may object to any single panel member assigned to the case. The objection must be written and received by the AIB Chair at least two (2) business days before the hearing. Upon ruling that a challenge is valid, the AIB Chair, after notifying the student and complainant, will replace the challenged member with another from the same category if possible. If another member of the same category is not available, the AIB Chair will select another member of the AIB to fill the vacancy.
4. The student(s), the instructor, and the instructor's chair or program director may attend the hearing. Each may, with the approval of the AIB Chair, address the panel. Any member of the panel may question the student(s) or the instructor. The student may present relevant evidence, including witnesses, in support of his or her position. The hearing will be conducted at the college and is closed to the public (including parents, legal guardians, and legal counsel). The AIB Chair will preside but not vote. Formal rules of evidence will not apply. The AIB Chair may admit or exclude witnesses during the testimony of other witnesses and may exclude any person who, in the Chair's judgment, disrupts the proceeding. The student or instructor may each be accompanied by a student or faculty member whose role is limited to advising the student or instructor. This adviser may not make statements, examine witnesses, or otherwise intervene. Advisers cannot be attorneys in any case.

5. The hearing panel will deliberate among themselves with no other persons present and make its determination by confidential majority vote based on the evidence. The sole purpose of the panel is to consider whether an academic integrity violation has occurred. The panel does not make recommendations on issues such as mitigating circumstances or the severity of the punishment. All materials and discussions with respect to any case are considered confidential educational records and are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and any release of case materials is guided by the college's FERPA guidelines. All communications follow the official Merrimack College communication policy as outlined in the Student Handbook. The minutes of the hearing or hearings are the responsibility of the AIB Chair and will be part of the official confidential file to be kept by the Chair of the AIB in the Provost / VPAA's office. The minutes should include the names of the student(s), the faculty member, the panel members, and any witnesses, advisers, or other individuals who attended the hearing, and should tell the result of the panel's decision.

The minutes should not include the actual vote count. The Chair may, at his or her sole discretion, also summarize information that was brought up in the hearing but that does not appear in the record.

6. The Chair of the Academic Integrity Board will notify in writing the instructor's dean and all parties, at the same time, of the hearing panel's findings.

## **Appendix B**

### **Academic Dishonesty Sanction Guidelines**

(Adapted from the University of Southern California)

Copying answers from other students on exam (quiz, test, other course work):

*F for the course*

One person allowing another to cheat from his or her exam (quiz, test, other course work):

*F for the course*

Possessing or using material during the exam (crib sheets, notes, books, etc.) which is not expressly permitted by the instructor:

*F for the course.*

Taking exam from room and later claiming that the instructor lost it:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action*

Failing to submit an assignment and later claiming that the instructor lost it:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action*

Changing answers after an exam (quiz, test, other course work) has been returned:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action*

Fraudulent possession of exam prior to administration:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action*

Obtaining a copy of an exam or answer key prior to administration:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action*

Having someone else take an exam:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action for both students*

### **Plagiarism:**

*F for the course*

Submission of purchased term papers or papers written by others:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action*

Submission of the same term papers to more than one instructor, where no previous approval has been given:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action*

Unauthorized collaboration on an assignment:

*F for the course for both students*