FAQ Disciplinary matters

The process when a student is suspected of cheating

1 You are invited to a meeting with the department to discuss what happened. After the meeting you will be told whether you are still suspected of cheating.

2 If the suspicion remains, a formal report is written and submitted to the Vice-Chancellor and the Disciplinary Board. You will receive an email where you are asked to write a statement. The email will tell you how much time you have for this – typically 7 or 14 days. It is important that you reply within this time limit, otherwise the University may ignore your reply.

3 The Vice-Chancellor, or another person on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, reads the statement and makes a decision, which can be either: the case is dismissed without further action, you receive a written warning, or the case is referred (passed on) to the Disciplinary Board for further investigation. The majority of cases are referred to the Disciplinary Board.

4 If the case is referred to the Disciplinary Board you will be invited to a meeting with the Board.

5 During the meeting the Disciplinary Board will make a decision, which can be either: the case is dismissed without further action, you receive a written warning, or you are suspended from your studies for a period of time.
Suspected of cheating: the meeting with the department

Why am I suspected of cheating?
There are several possible reasons for a suspicion of cheating. During written exams it is a part of the invigilators’ job to make sure that students do not bring unauthorised materials into the examination hall, or collaborate with each other when this is not allowed. If the invigilator suspects cheating in some form you will be informed about this during the exam. A suspicion can also arise when a written assignment or unsupervised examination has been submitted, and plagiarised material is detected in a system for plagiarism checks. The system can show if there are text similarities with material on the internet, such as academic publications or books, or with assignments submitted by other students.

I have been contacted by my examiner who says that I am suspected of unauthorised collaboration during an examination. I have been invited to a meeting with the examiner and the director of studies. What will happen during the meeting?
If you are suspected of cheating or plagiarism, then the department must investigate this. The purpose of the meeting you are being invited to is to inform you about the suspicion, and to hear your side of the story. The meeting is also an opportunity for you to ask any questions about your case, for example if it is unclear to you why you are suspected of cheating, or if you want more information about what happens next.
During or after the meeting the department will decide whether to report the case to the Vice-Chancellor and the Disciplinary Board.

The department has summoned me to a meeting because I am suspected of cheating. They have not clarified the reason for this suspicion. How can I prepare for the meeting if I do not know the background to the suspicion?
If, before the meeting, you want more information about the reasons why you are suspected of cheating, then you can ask the person who invited you to the meeting.
After the meeting the department decided to submit a report to the Vice-Chancellor and the Disciplinary Board, even though I explained that I did not cheat and showed them evidence that confirmed my explanation. Why don’t they believe me?

The department has to submit a report if the suspicion of cheating remains after the meeting. It is possible that they cannot rule out that you cheated, despite your explanation and evidence. It is important to remember that it is the Vice-Chancellor or the Disciplinary Board that decide the case, not your department. You are allowed to continue with your studies as usual until a final decision is made.

The department is not allowed to take any disciplinary action against you, either during the investigation process or after a decision has been made. However, your assignment or exam will usually not be graded until a final decision is made on whether you cheated or not.

**After the meeting with the department: a report has been submitted**

**How long will it take after the department has submitted a report until a decision is made?**

The matter should be handled quickly, but there is no specific time frame. Normally the Disciplinary Board meets once a month, and it usually takes 1–2 months from the time a report is submitted until the case is closed. Because of covid-19 the number of disciplinary cases has increased significantly, which can result in a longer processing time than usual.

**I am still waiting to be invited to a meeting with the Disciplinary Board. I am starting to get very anxious and have a hard time keeping up with my studies. What can I do?**

Many students in this situation express that they are not feeling well. We recommend that you try your best to continue with your studies as usual while waiting for the invitation to the meeting. Apart from seeking support from friends and family, if you feel you cannot handle the situation you can contact Student Health Services or primary care, who can support you in dealing with the situation that you are in.
How do I write a statement?

There is no specific template that you have to follow when writing your statement, but here are some points that you should include. The most important thing is that the statement is comprehensible and that your perspective on what has happened is clear. You should include the following:

- Your name and the reference number of your case, i.e. UFV 202X/XXX. You can find this number in the email where you are requested to write a statement.
- Which exam and course the report on suspicion concerns. It is good to specify how many credits the entire course is equivalent to and also, if possible, how many credits the specific exam corresponds to. If you are studying a programme you may also add this information.
- An explanation as to what happened, from your perspective. What happened and why did it happen? It is good to write what your intentions were: either that you did not intend to cheat or plagiarise or, if that is the case, you did intend this and then explain why it happened (why you plagiarised/cheated).
- A statement of your planned studies for the current semester or the upcoming semester. What are you studying at the moment and what will you be studying later on? What possible consequences would a suspension or a warning have for you and your forthcoming studies?
What are the possible consequences?

There are three possible outcomes:

- The case is closed with no further action. This means it is not proved that you have cheated (you are “innocent”).

- You receive a written warning. This means that you have been found guilty of cheating, but the circumstances are not severe enough for a suspension. You can continue with your studies, but will probably have to re-do the examination or assignment.

- You receive a suspension. This means you have been found guilty of cheating, and the circumstances are considered severe enough that a warning is not a sufficient consequence. The Disciplinary Board can decide to suspend a student up to six months, but it is more common to receive a suspension for 2–6 weeks, starting from the day after the decision has been made. During the suspension period you are not allowed to take part in lectures, seminars, exams or other activities related to your education. You will not have access to the student portal, the University buildings or the library. The suspension will be recorded in Ladok and reported to CSN (the Board of Student Finance). We recommend that you contact a study counsellor or the teacher responsible for the course to make a plan for your return to your studies.

I am also studying at another higher education institution. Will the suspension affect those studies and my student finance from CSN (the Board of Student Finance)?

The suspension only concerns your studies at Uppsala University. Your studies at the other higher education institution should not be affected by the decision. Any consequences for your student finance will depend on the details of your student finance decision. Contact CSN if you feel unsure or have questions about this.

Can I re-do the examination or assignment while I wait for a decision?

Until a final decision is made your department should treat you as “innocent”, which means you can continue studying as normal. If the course or department offers an opportunity for re-examination while your case is being considered, then you are allowed to take part in this.
Which is the most probable outcome in my case?
It can be hard to predict the outcome in any particular case, because this is based on an overall assessment of all the circumstances. However, there are some key aspects that are taken into consideration. One is the credit value of the specific examination: for example, cheating in an examination worth 7.5 credits will generally result in a more severe outcome than in an examination worth 2 credits. How long you have been a student is also taken into consideration: if you have studied for a long time you are expected to have a better understanding of examination rules than if you have just started. The assessment is also affected by your intent (whether you cheated intentionally or not), as well as the evidence that the department presents in regards to the suspicion.

The meeting with the Disciplinary Board

What will happen during the meeting with the Disciplinary Board and what is expected of me?
Before the meeting the Disciplinary Board will read both your statement and the department’s report. During the meeting you and the representative of the department will be given the opportunity to make further statements. If you have nothing to add you can refer to your written statement. Then the Board might have questions for you or for the representative of the department. When both parties have spoken, you are asked to leave the room for a couple of minutes while the Board make their decision. You will then be called back into the room to hear the Board's decision.
It is optional for you as a student to participate in the meeting. We do recommend that you take part, so that you are able to answer any questions that the Board have. Also, by attending the meeting you will be informed of the decision as soon as it is made. This is important because a suspension often takes effect the following day. It may be possible to participate by telephone or video meeting. Contact the staff member of the legal department of Uppsala University handling your case as soon as possible if this is something that you would like to do.

How long is the meeting with the Disciplinary Board?
The Board normally schedules 15 minutes for each case.
I will be meeting the Disciplinary Board in a couple of weeks. If I get a suspension I will miss the registration of my next course. What can I do?

Contact your study counsellor or the course coordinator, and ask them about this. Some courses and programmes are more flexible than others regarding registration.

If you are unable to register for the next course, then your suspension in effect has consequences reaching beyond the weeks during which you are actually suspended. Unfortunately this is not something that the Disciplinary Board can take into account. Since the suspension only applies to your studies at Uppsala University, it is possible to study at another higher education institution in the meantime, if that is an option for you.

Will my suspension or warning be visible on my degree certificate?

The decision of a warning or suspension will remain in the University records but will not be visible in the degree certificate, grades, study certificate or similar.

I was suspended because the Board found that I had cheated during an examination. I think the accusations are unfair and I want to appeal the decision. How do I appeal and how long does it take?

If you are found guilty during the meeting with the Disciplinary Board you will receive a document telling you how you can appeal against the decision, and how much time you have for this.

Your appeal should be in writing, and must include the date, your name, personal identity number (if you have this) and contact information. You should state which decision you are appealing against and how you want the decision to be changed (for example: a shorter suspension, or none at all). You also have to motivate why you think that it should be changed. The appeal should be addressed to the Administrative Court in Uppsala, but should be sent to the University. Send the appeal by post or email to the University Registrar. Remember to sign the appeal, and make sure it reaches the Registrar within the given time limit, which is usually three weeks from the day of the Disciplinary Board’s decision. The University will then forward your appeal to the Administrative Court by the following day.

In your appeal you can ask for inhibition. This means that your suspension will be paused until after your case has been tried. This is not always granted by the Administrative Court. It is not possible to say how quickly the Court will make a decision on inhibition or on the case. If the Court grants inhibition, you may continue your studies until a final decision is made regarding the case. The Court will examine the circumstances of your case, and may
reach a different conclusion than the Disciplinary Board. The Court can overturn the Disciplinary Board’s decision entirely (meaning that you are found not guilty), reduce the penalty from a suspension to a warning, or reduce the duration of the suspension. The Court can also confirm the Disciplinary Board’s decision, in which case inhibition will be ended and your suspension will resume.

The above text is partly based on the University’s internal guidelines (Routine for dealing with suspected deceptive conduct in examinations). If you have any further questions about disciplinary proceedings, contact the Student and PhD Student Ombudspersons on ombud@us uu.se.