

Respiratory Care Program

Academic Integrity & Zero-Tolerance Cheating Policy

Aligned with CoARC Accreditation Standards

1. Purpose

The Respiratory Care Program is committed to upholding the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. Maintaining integrity is essential to producing competent respiratory therapists who can provide safe and effective patient care. This policy establishes a **zero-tolerance approach** to cheating, plagiarism, falsification of records, academic dishonesty, and any conduct that undermines professional behavior or program outcomes.

CoARC accreditation standards emphasize the responsibility of programs to **ensure educational quality, uphold accountability to the profession and public, and maintain integrity in the accreditation process**. This policy supports those expectations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to **all students** enrolled in the Respiratory Care Program across academic, laboratory, simulation, and clinical settings.

3. Definitions

3.1 Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- Cheating on exams, assignments, or competency assessments
- Copying another student's work or allowing one's work to be copied
- Unauthorized collaboration
- Use of unauthorized materials in any assessment
- Plagiarism of any written or digital work
- Fabrication or falsification of clinical documents, logs, patient data, or skills check-offs
- Altering or falsifying any academic or program records
- Once beginning any exam to leave the exam screen will be considered cheating

These behaviors violate the ethical expectations inherent in respiratory care education and the program's responsibility to prepare graduates for safe, competent practice—an

obligation emphasized in accreditation standards used for evaluating respiratory care programs.

4. Policy Statement: Zero Tolerance for Cheating

The Respiratory Care Program maintains a strict **zero-tolerance policy** for cheating or any form of academic dishonesty. Any confirmed act constitutes a **serious violation** of program expectations and compromises educational integrity—an essential element of maintaining quality required in CoARC-accredited programs.

5. Alignment With CoARC Standards

CoARC requires programs to:

- **Ensure appropriate program outcomes and accountability to the profession and public**
- **Maintain standards of educational quality consistent with accreditation guidelines**

Academic dishonesty threatens program outcomes and undermines the integrity of the educational process. Enforcement of strict academic integrity is therefore an essential component of meeting CoARC accreditation expectations.

6. Procedures & Consequences

6.1 Reporting

Faculty, clinical instructors, preceptors, and students must immediately report suspected academic dishonesty to the Program Director.

6.2 Investigation

The Program Director or designee will:

1. Review all available evidence
2. Interview involved individuals
3. Document findings
4. Maintain records in accordance with institutional and accreditation requirements

6.3 Final Decision

Final decisions will be made by the Program Director. The Program Director will determine the consequences.

6.4 Consequences

Any **verified** instance of cheating or academic dishonesty will result in one or more of the following:

Academic Sanctions:

- Automatic failure of the assignment, exam, or assessment and/or
- Course failure (for cheating on exams, special projects, or repeated offenses)

Programmatic Sanctions:

- Probation for first offense incurred with assignments
- **Immediate dismissal** from the Respiratory Care Program (for cheating on exams, special projects, or repeated offenses)

Falsification of **clinical records** or **competency documentation** will result in **automatic program dismissal**, as it directly jeopardizes patient safety and violates expectations for entry-to-practice competence under accreditation guidelines.

7. Student Responsibilities

Students must:

- Demonstrate honesty in all academic and clinical activities
 - Complete work independently unless collaboration is explicitly allowed
 - Properly cite external sources
 - Uphold professional standards and ethical behaviors expected of respiratory therapists
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8. Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty must:

- Clearly communicate assignment expectations
 - Ensure exam security
 - Maintain fairness and consistency in application of this policy
 - Report and document all incidents of academic dishonesty
 - Provide students with access to institutional and program policies
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9. Appeal Process

Students have the right to appeal academic integrity decisions according to institutional policies. Appeals must be submitted in writing within the timeframe established by the college's academic grievance procedure.

10. Acknowledgment

All students are required to sign an Academic Integrity Agreement verifying their understanding of and commitment to this policy.

By signing this document I acknowledge the update to all Respiratory Student Handbooks and RET Course Syllabi to include the following courses:

RET 1025C	RET 1265C	RET 1295	RET 2714C	RET 2930
RET 1274C	RET 1485	RET 1875L	RET 2876L	RET 2877L
RET 1450C	RET 1874L			

Student's Signature _____

Date _____