

## Case\* #12: Stolen exam

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**Allegation:** Student A stole a copy of a final exam while in his course instructor's office and shared it with his friends. The course instructor felt as though this constituted academic misconduct according to the university's Academic Calendar, section 5.16.1: "Obtaining by improper means examination papers, tests, or similar materials; use or distribution of such materials to others."

**Background:** Student A, who is a fourth year student in a fourth year course, is accused of stealing a copy of a final exam worth 40% from his course instructor's office. This is the second time the student has been accused of academic misconduct; the first one was a Lesser Academic Offence. The instructor had met with the student in her office by appointment to discuss a question the student had. After the student left, the instructor noticed the final exam was missing. An electronic copy of the exam was later found on a course Facebook page. Because this is a final exam and worth over 25%, the instructor reported the allegation to the Academic Integrity Committee. The instructor provided a copy of the original exam, a copy of the exam posted to Facebook, and a snapshot of the Facebook screen showing the exam and students discussing it. The instructor also outlined the timeline of events, showing the date she met with the student and the date that the exam was posted to Facebook.

The Academic Integrity Committee met with the student and showed the student all of the evidence. The student was given the opportunity to explain his side of the story. The student admitted to this offense immediately since it was clearly posted from his Facebook account. He explained that he was worried about graduating on time and was tempted by seeing the exam sitting on the instructor's desk. He had not planned to try to steal the exam.

**Decision:** The Academic Integrity Committee determined that the student was guilty of Academic Misconduct and that the sanction should be an F for the course.

**Rationale:** Because it was a second offence and the nature of the offence was very severe, the Academic Integrity Committee considered several possible sanctions, including suspension. The first offence had occurred in the student's first year and was considered very minor. This second offence was a "crime of opportunity." Because stealing a final exam is a very serious offence, the Committee decided that an F on the course was appropriate. It would mean that the student would have to make up the course in another term in order to graduate. The student was reminded that any subsequent offences would result in a much more severe penalty, most likely suspension or expulsion.

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\* Case studies are based on examples of common problems with academic misconduct. All names and identifying information have been removed.