

Academic Policies

The *Swarthmore College Bulletin* (</college-catalog>) (College Catalog) is the authoritative source of information on degree requirements, major requirements, and course descriptions.

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Academic Freedom and Responsibility

(Excerpted from the full Academic Freedom and Responsibility policy adopted by the faculty, 25 May 1971, approved by the Board of Managers, 3 April 1971; revised, spring of 2001)

Swarthmore College has long subscribed to the fundamental tenets of academic freedom articulated in the 1940 “Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure” by the American Association of University Professors. This doctrine has been reiterated and amplified in the association’s 1970 “Statement on Freedom and Responsibility.” Swarthmore College adheres to the 1970 Statement, relevant portions of which are reproduced below. The complete texts of the association’s 1940 and 1970 statements are available at www.aaup.org/issues/academic-freedom (<https://www.aaup.org/our-work/protecting-academic-freedom>).

Membership in the academic community imposes on students, faculty members, administrators, and trustees an obligation to respect the dignity of others; to acknowledge their right to express differing opinions; and to foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and instruction, and free expression on and off campus. The right of students to exercise free expression, including peaceful dissent, orderly demonstrations, protests, and picketing, will be

respected. Swarthmore College honors the American Association of University Professors' statements on freedom and responsibility, including the following: "The expression of dissent and the attempt to produce change, therefore, may not be carried out in ways that injure individuals or damage institutional facilities or disrupt the classes of one's teachers or colleagues. Speakers on campus must not only be protected from violence but also be given an opportunity to be heard. Those who seek to call attention to grievances must not do so in ways that significantly impede the functions of the institution."

Expressions of dissent are expected in any living and learning community, but this expression must not interfere with normal College business. It is a violation of the norms of this academic community for anyone to prevent the conduct of College business, including lectures, meetings, events (such as admissions tours or job interviews), ceremonies, or other necessary business and community functions. Protests are permissible, except in the following locations: classrooms, offices, libraries, dining halls (including cafes), Worth Health Center, residence hall rooms, and lecture halls, ensuring that the normal work, residential experiences, and services of the College can continue. Students who disrupt the functions of the College, including violating the rights of community members and invited speakers, may be subject to the student conduct process.

Students are entitled to an atmosphere conducive to learning and even-handed treatment in all aspects of the teacher–student relationship. Faculty members may not refuse to enroll or teach students because of the student's beliefs or the possible uses to which they may put the knowledge to be gained in a course. The student should not be forced by the authority inherent in the instructional role to make particular personal choices as to political action or their own part in society. Evaluation of students and the award of credit must be based on academic performance professionally judged and not on matters irrelevant to that performance, such as personality, race, religion, degree of political activism, or personal beliefs.

If a student has a grievance against a faculty member that cannot be resolved directly with the faculty member who is involved, then the student should take their concerns to the department chair. If the grievance remains unresolved, then the student should contact the provost. For a grievance based on discrimination, including harassment, the student is encouraged to consult with the [equal opportunity officer \(/equal-opportunity/non-discrimination-and-equal-opportunity\)](#) or, in the case of sexual misconduct, the [Title IX coordinator \(/share\)](#).

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is defined as a violation of the College's standards of academic integrity whether these violations are intentional or unintentional. Academic misconduct consists of cheating on an exam, plagiarism on an academic assignment, or unauthorized collaborative work.

Evidence of academic misconduct may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Some of the student's work coincides with or closely paraphrases a source that is not properly acknowledged.
- Glaring coincidences in the work of students on exams, papers, problem sets, etc., where cooperation in producing the work was not permitted.
- Submission of the same work in more than one course. When submitting any work to an instructor for a course, it is assumed that the work was produced specifically for that course. Submission of the same work in more than one course without prior approval is prohibited.

Sources that must be acknowledged include but are not limited to, lab manuals, books, articles in books, journal articles, and web pages, along with graphs, charts, tables, data sets, etc., in any of the sources just mentioned. Proper acknowledgment must indicate both the source and how it served as a source for any specific portions of the student's assignment.

The informal nature of some writing may obviate the necessity of rigorously formal citation but still requires honest attribution to original authors of all borrowed materials. Students should consult with instructors whenever there is doubt as to proper documentation.

An instructor who has good evidence to suspect a student or students of academic misconduct will, at the instructor's discretion, consult the department chair about the case and then meet with the student (or students) to discuss the incident in question. At the instructor's discretion, the department chair or other department instructors may be present. After this meeting, if the instructor's suspicions are not allayed, the instructor will submit a report to the Senior Associate Dean of Student Life. The report will include a narrative of the incident and evidence supporting the allegation, which will be included in the material available to the student(s) in question and also reviewed by all members of the CJC hearing panel. The College Judiciary Committee will typically resolve a complaint under the academic misconduct policy, particularly if facts are contested. In all allegations of academic misconduct, students are appointed a case manager.

However, a respondent student may request resolution through an administrative adjudication to be conducted by a student conduct administrator (typically the Associate Dean and Director of Student Conduct or another member of the Division of Student Affairs staff). The student conduct administrator will meet with the reporting faculty member and the responding student to determine responsibility and render a decision as to what sanctions, if applicable, may be implemented. Both parties must agree to a resolution by administrative adjudication. The case packet — consisting of the faculty member’s report, relevant academic materials, and any response to the allegation — will serve as the primary evidence in making a determination of responsibility. Both parties must receive notice, the opportunity to review the case packet in advance, and the opportunity to present relevant information to the student conduct administrator.

An administrative adjudication is particularly appropriate for a first offense for which the responding student has admitted to the academic misconduct and there is no significant dispute in the relevant facts of the case packet. In deciding whether the academic policy has been violated, the student conduct administrator will reach a determination by a preponderance of the evidence standard— that is, whether the conduct was more likely than not to have occurred as alleged. Even when requested, depending upon the nature or severity of an allegation (entire senior thesis, a significant number of students involved, no prior College precedent, etc.) the student conduct administrator may decline to handle the matter through an administrative adjudication and refer the case to the College Judiciary Committee at any time.

In cases where a student has a pre-existing offense or in cases that do not have any existing precedent the case will be automatically referred to the College Judiciary Committee for adjudication.

In some cases, the Senior Associate Dean of Student Life will provide copies of the report to all faculty members of the College Judicial Committee, including alternates, and will call a preliminary meeting of the faculty members of the CJC for the purpose of determining the merits of the case. If in the judgment of this group, there are sufficient grounds to warrant an adjudication, the Senior Associate Dean of Student Life will continue with the formal CJC adjudication process.

Academic Progress Standards and Requirements

The academic year at Swarthmore is 32 weeks long, during which time students are expected to complete 6 to 8 semester course credits of work. Normal progress toward the degree of bachelor of arts or bachelor of science is made by eight semesters' work of four course credits or the equivalent each semester. Four course credits per semester is the normal load. Students may and frequently do vary this by programs of three or five semester course credits, with special permission. College policy normally does not permit programs of fewer than 3 course credits within the normal eight-semester enrollment. Programs of more than 5 credits or fewer than 4 credits require special permission (see [section 4.1 \(https://catalog.swarthmore.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=2218#4.1\)](https://catalog.swarthmore.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=2218#4.1) on tuition and [section 8.3 \(https://catalog.swarthmore.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=2198#8.3\)](https://catalog.swarthmore.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=2198#8.3) on registration). Course credit earned by examination does not count in registration load.

Satisfactory progress towards the 32 credit graduation requirement includes earning passing grades, an overall grade point average of at least 2.0 by graduation, and completing at least one major and the non-major degree requirements listed in chapter 9 of the catalog. The definitions of upper-class levels are as follows: Students become sophomores when they have earned at least 6 course credits toward their degree. Students become juniors when they have earned 14 to 16 credits. Students become seniors when they have earned 22 to 24 credits. Some offices on campus, such as student housing, may have additional requirements in their definitions of the student classes.

The Committee on Academic Requirements (CAR) is a standing committee of the faculty charged with regular review of students' academic programs and the administration of faculty regulations concerning academic standards and requirements. The committee is also empowered to recommend to the faculty waivers of certain requirements (e.g. the senior-year residency requirement). Students can petition the CAR to request a waiver of a requirement by completing the [Academic Requirements Petition Form \(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfMY0WBpNjbWaO_pox_rVlcnrGU0uSSg4ldxbnSp61q0LU4w/viewform\)](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfMY0WBpNjbWaO_pox_rVlcnrGU0uSSg4ldxbnSp61q0LU4w/viewform) [pdf] available on the Registrar's Office website.

With the Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Academic Success as co-chairs, the committee regularly meets approximately three weeks after the end of each semester to review the academic records of all students who earn two or more grades less than C in the preceding semester, or who have two or more Incomplete grades, or who are not making satisfactory progress in completing distribution or other degree requirements including cumulative GPA, or

who are under advisement from previous CAR mandates. This committee may also review student records at other times should information arise about academic difficulties that were not available at the time of the regular committee meetings.

The committee normally follows the guidelines outlined below, but the committee also retains the right to consider extenuating circumstances of a student's case, such as health issues, family crises or other special circumstances, which may vary from the guidelines. Additionally, the Vice President for Student Affairs or designee may vary from these guidelines within the appeals process, to take into consideration new information and/or extenuating circumstances about a student.

The committee may take one of several actions including, but not limited to:

1. **Warning:** Students meet with their student dean as needed.
2. **Probation:** Students may be placed on academic probation, continued on probation, or removed from probation, but, students may not be continued on probation for more than two consecutive semesters. Rising seniors and current seniors may receive a specific probation senior letter, which may include probationary status, if the Committee is concerned about a student's progress to graduation. Usually, the start date of any probation is the first day of classes of the next semester. The duration of the probation is typically one semester and lasts until the committee removes the probationary status at the following committee meeting. Notification of probation is considered a change in good standing status and will normally be sent to parent(s) or guardian(s). The student meets regularly with their student dean. Additionally, Residential Peer Leader roles (GAs, RAs, and SAMs) require that students must be in and remain in good standing throughout their employment as an RPL. Also, academic good standing is required for participation in varsity athletics, per NCAA bylaws
3. **Required to withdraw:** Students who fail to meet the terms of their probation are normally Required to Withdraw, which requires the student to take a leave of absence for the upcoming semester. Students whose academic performance is particularly poor may be Required to Withdraw without having been placed on probation earlier. Students on Required Leave must take a leave of absence for a semester or longer and engage in meaningful activity (i.e. academic classes at another institution, work, and/or volunteer activities). Appeals may be made to the Vice President of Student Affairs at the time of notification of the change of status. The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) are notified because this is considered a change in good standing status.

In order to return from Required Leave, the student must write a detailed request to the Associate Dean of Academic Success requesting permission to return, explaining what happened, what was done while the student was away, and outline a plan for how the student will address, upon return, the issues that resulted in the required leave. In some cases, the student will be required to bring back credits, pre-approved by departments, to catch up with the student's class standing. The end date of the leave is normally the first day of classes of the semester of return. Students who are granted permission to return following a Required Leave will be placed on academic probation for the return semester. The academic probation starts the first day of classes.

Computer Systems and Networks Acceptable Use Policy

Use of the Swarthmore College computer systems and networks is governed by the general norms of responsible community conduct described in the student, faculty, and staff handbooks; by the College's [electronic privacy policy_\(/its/electronic-privacy\)](https://www.swarthmore.edu/its/electronic-privacy_(/its/electronic-privacy)); ([https://www.swarthmore.edu/its/electronic-privacy_\(/its/electronic-privacy\)](https://www.swarthmore.edu/its/electronic-privacy_(/its/electronic-privacy))); by local, state and federal laws; and by College policies specific to use of the computer systems and networks, which are described in the following sections.

This policy refers to all who use the computers, networks, and peripherals owned or operated by the College, or who gain access to third-party computers and networks through the College's system. Swarthmore College normally grants access to its computing network and systems to currently enrolled students, to current and emeriti faculty, and to currently employed staff.

Individuals with access to the Swarthmore College network have the following obligations and responsibilities:

- 1. To respect other people and the College's intellectual environment.** Use of the network may not violate federal, state, or local law, including, but not limited to the laws of defamation, forgery, copyright/trademark infringement, and harassment. The copying or serving of copyrighted material such as music, movies, and other multimedia is strictly forbidden.
- 2. To protect each individual account from unauthorized use by others.** Every account is provided for the use of a specific individual and may not be shared with nor loaned to others. Additionally, office computers are generally assigned to specific individuals for College-related work. Staff must obtain permission before using a computer not assigned to them.

3. **To respect the integrity of other users' accounts.** Individuals must not use another person's user ID without express permission or attempt to decode passwords or to access information illegitimately. For example, sending electronic mail under another person's name (forged e-mail) is a violation of this policy.
4. **To avoid engaging in any activity that may be harmful to the systems operated by the College.** Users may not attempt to disrupt, gain unauthorized access to, or damage computing and network systems (hardware and software) belonging to Swarthmore College, or to use the College's computing resources to disrupt, infiltrate or damage systems belonging to others on campus or around the world. When system vulnerability is discovered, users are expected to report it to Information Technology Services (ITS).
5. **To avoid excess use of shared resources.** Excess use of resources may occur through monopolizing systems, overloading networks, misusing printer or other resources, or sending spam or unsolicited mass electronic mail.

Violations of these guidelines that come to the attention of ITS will be referred, as appropriate, to the Division of Student Affairs, Provost's Office, or Human Resources Office. Where appropriate, ITS may temporarily withhold services from students, faculty, or staff while referring the case in a timely manner to the appropriate College office. Sanctions can also include termination of all OSP services to the individual(s).

Leaves from the College

Voluntary leaves of absence. Student leaves of absence for the duration of a semester are freely permitted. A student planning a leave of absence should submit the necessary form in mySwarthmore prior to the deadline published each semester—usually November 15 and April 1. When possible, the student should specify the semester of expected return. The student must secure return approval with the Associate Dean of Academic Success prior to return (usually by November 15 or July 1). Students may continue on a leave of absence for a maximum of three years. After three years on a leave of absence, students are withdrawn from the College.

Please note that some leaves may affect the student's repayment of loans.

Withdrawal. Withdrawal from the College may occur for academic, disciplinary, health, personal, or financial reasons and may be voluntary or required by the College. Students withdrawing from the College before the end of the semester receive the grade notation "W" (withdrawal) on their permanent record for all in-progress courses.

Students are **not** permitted to withdraw from a semester after final exams are underway.

Involuntary withdrawals. The College reserves the right to exclude at any time students whose conduct it regards as unsatisfactory, or students who experience medical or behavioral needs requiring a level of support that cannot reasonably be provided while living in residence or participating in an academic program. In no case will a student's mental or physical condition itself be the basis for a withdrawal required by the College.

Such conduct includes, but is not limited to: a student engages in, or is at significant risk of engaging in, behavior that could result in physical harm to self or other(s); manifests an inability to attend to personal needs related to food, shelter, personal safety and general well-being, such that there is a reasonable possibility of serious physical harm; behaves in a manner that interferes substantially with the rightful daily activities of members of the College or surrounding community, with the educational and/or residential environment, or with the orderly operation of the College, including behavior that imposes an unreasonable burden on the College's human resources needed for continued management of such behavior; fails to pay term bill by the stated due date; fails to provide required immunization records by the stated deadline; and fails to register as required at the beginning of each term or fails to complete all course work and have all course grades recorded for the prior term.

Before placing any student with a documented disability on a mandatory leave of absence, the College will conduct an individualized assessment to determine if there are disability accommodations that would permit the student to continue to participate in Swarthmore's campus community without taking a leave of absence.

An Evaluation Committee, comprising two Student Deans, makes the decision to require withdrawal from the College. The Evaluation Committee will review the identified behavior and may consult with the Director of Student Health and Wellness, the Director of Counseling and Psychological Services, or any other appropriate College official when making its decision. Decisions of the Evaluation Committee may be appealed to the Vice President for Student Affairs within five (5) business days of the decision.

The provisions in this involuntary withdrawal policy do not take the place of disciplinary actions that are in response to violations of the College's policies and regulations, and they do not preclude the removal or dismissal of students from the College or campus housing as a result of violations of the College's policies and rules and regulations.

Access to College Services & Activities. Students who take a voluntary leave of absence from the College may seek assistance with academic or career planning and will maintain access to their Swarthmore email account. They will also remain eligible to use the mental health support services offered by TimelyCare and CAPS On-Call. If a student misuses any College services, then the student may lose access to all services or privileges.

Students on a leave of absence do not retain library borrowing privileges, are not eligible to be on student payroll, are not eligible to register for or audit courses, and are not eligible to vote in student government elections or referendums. Students who are on leave or on part-time status, do not have access to campus facilities and services (except when visiting as an approved guest or as a member of the public), are not eligible to serve in leadership roles in student organizations and student government and are not eligible to use or benefit from the student activities fee funds. This is a general description and students should consult with the relevant offices for more detail as-needed.

Return after hospitalization. Students who are hospitalized for a period of time during the semester are subject to readmission procedures before they may return to campus to resume their studies. The College applies its readmission procedures in a nondiscriminatory manner and may require any documentation or evaluation it deems appropriate. A student returning to campus after a physical health concern must communicate with the Student Health and Wellness Center director or designee prior to returning to on-campus housing, attending classes, or other College-sponsored events, to ensure the student's readiness to resume college life and so that follow-up care can be discussed. A student returning from an inpatient mental health facility or hospital must communicate with the director of Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS), or designee, to set up a post-hospital consultation within one (1) business day of returning to on-campus housing, attending classes, or participating in other College-sponsored events.

Readmission following withdrawal or leave of absence. A student who has taken a leave of absence or withdrawn from the College for any reason, voluntary or involuntary, must apply for readmission by submitting a return request form (via mySwarthmore) to the Associate Dean of Academic Success. The return request deadline for a Spring return is November 15. The return request deadline for a Fall return is July 1, however students are strongly encouraged to request Fall return by April 1, if possible.

A student applying to the College for readmission after withdrawal is required to provide appropriate documentation of increased ability to function academically and in a residential environment and/or of a decreased hazard to the health and safety of others. In the case of withdrawal for medical reasons, this documentation must include an evaluation by the student's personal healthcare provider. In addition, the student will generally be required to show evidence of successful social, occupational, and/or academic functioning during the time away from the College. This evidence must include the completion of any outstanding Incomplete grades on record.

Evidence provided by the student is reviewed and evaluated by the Associate Dean of Academic Success (or designee), who makes readmission determinations in consultation (as needed) with an additional dean, the director of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and/or the director of Student Health and Wellness. In the case of health-related withdrawals, the materials will be reviewed and evaluated by the director of Student Health and Wellness and/or the director of Counseling and Psychological Services. At the discretion of the Evaluation Committee which required a withdrawal, such evaluations may be required for other types of withdrawals as appropriate. These evaluations will provide adjunctive information to the readmission decision-making process. If the student successfully provides the aforementioned evidence, the Associate Dean of Academic Success (or designee) and an additional dean meet with the student and then make a determination regarding the student's readiness to resume study at Swarthmore.

Readmission decisions will be provided to the student in writing. Students may appeal readmission decisions to the Vice President for Student Affairs or their designee within 5 business days of the decision. Grounds for readmission decision appeals are: 1) New evidence that could affect the return decision that was unavailable at the time of the decision; 2) Procedural errors that had a material impact on the outcome of the return process. Replies to readmission appeals will be provided within 5 business days.

Libraries

As a partner in the educational mission of the College, the Libraries foster critical inquiry, scholarly discovery and engagement, and innovation and creativity - a dynamic forum for people and ideas. The Swarthmore College Libraries are committed to providing a safe, productive environment for study and research. The Libraries want students to be aware of the [Swarthmore Libraries code of conduct \(/libraries/code-conduct\)](/libraries/code-conduct) and [borrowing policies \(/libraries/student-borrowing\)](/libraries/student-borrowing).

Notice of Non-Discrimination & Harassment

The College expressly prohibits any form of discrimination and harassment on the basis of any College-recognized protected classification, including sex, race, color, age, religion, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, marital status, medical condition, veteran status, or disability in any decision regarding admissions, employment, or involvement in a College program or activity in accordance with the letter and spirit of federal, state, and local non-discrimination and equal opportunity laws, such as Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, The Age Discrimination in Employment Act, The Americans with Disabilities Act and ADA Amendments Act, The Equal Pay Act, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, and the Borough of Swarthmore Ordinance on Non-Discrimination.

More information about the College's resolution process of complaints implicating this notice can be found in the Swarthmore College Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation. To make inquiries or file a complaint, please contact the Swarthmore College Equal Opportunity Officer.

ADDRESS

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500 College Avenue
Swarthmore, PA 19081

EMAIL

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PHONE

610-328-8365 ()

FAX


610-328-8487 ()

Search the Student Handbook


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SWARTHMORE


500 College Avenue
Swarthmore, PA 19081
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