



# 1 Academic Honesty

What is academic dishonesty?

Can I prevent academic dishonesty in my class?

Where do I turn if I need help?

Integrity is an important component of students' academic experience. The academic evaluation a student receives for a course becomes a permanent university student record, and it is critical that such records be accurate and consistent.

In addition, the integrity students learn and exhibit at the university will be the model for the professional integrity they practice when they complete their academic work.

While integrity involves all members of the academic community, faculty, staff, and students, you, as the teaching assistant, are uniquely positioned to teach, model, and assure integrity in students' academic assignments.

## What is Academic Dishonesty?

Academic dishonesty includes four general types of activity: cheating, dishonest conduct, plagiarism, and collusion. Academic dishonesty is not limited to the following examples:

### *Cheating:*

- Copying from others during an examination.
- Communicating exam answers with another student during an examination.
- Offering another person's work as one's own.
- Taking an examination for another student or having someone take an examination for oneself.
- Sharing answers for a take-home examination unless specifically authorized by the instructor.
- Tampering with an examination after it has been corrected, then returning it for more credit.
- Using unauthorized materials, prepared answers, written notes or information concealed in a bluebook or elsewhere during an examination.
- Allowing others to do research and writing of an assigned paper (including use of the services of a commercial term-paper company).



### *Dishonest Conduct:*

- Stealing or attempting to steal an examination or answer key from the instructor.
- Changing or attempting to change official academic records without proper sanction.
- Submitting substantial portions of the same work for credit in more than one course without consulting all instructors involved.
- Forging add/drop/change cards and other enrollment documents, or altering such documents after signatures have been obtained.
- Intentionally impairing, in class, the concentration of other students and/or the instructor.

### *Plagiarism:*

Plagiarism is intellectual theft. It means use of the intellectual creations of another without proper attribution. Plagiarism may take two forms, which are clearly related:

- To steal or pass off as one's own the idea or words of another.
- To use a creative production without crediting the source.

### *Collusion:*

Any student who knowingly or intentionally helps another student perform any of the above acts of cheating or plagiarism is guilty of collusion.

What do I do if a Student Commits an Act of Academic Dishonesty?

Before the course begins:

In your planning meeting with your professor you will want to clarify the procedures that will be used in responding to academic dishonesty. Some faculty delegate full responsibility for such matters to TAs, while others prefer to pursue such matters personally. The Office for Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards recognizes your role in reporting academic dishonesty by authority of your appointment.

## **Prevention, Confrontation, Reporting**

**Prevention:** It is important that instructors take steps to prevent academic dishonesty as they set up the class and develop each assignment. For example, during the initial class meeting in which expectations and structure for the course are discussed, include a discussion of the academic standards for the course.

**Confronting Acts of Academic Dishonesty:** The Office for Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards can assist with various strategies for identifying and confronting cheating during exams, in out-of-class assignments or in research papers.

**Reporting:** Instructors have a contractual obligation to report allegations of academic dishonesty to the Office for Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards. Following appropriate reporting procedures protects instructors from accusations of misconduct and unfair grading. Specific instructions on reporting academic misconduct are outlined in Module 5.3.

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### General Strategies

- Make sure students know the criteria for evaluating their performance: describe acceptable and unacceptable behavior; give examples of plagiarism or of impermissible collaboration.
- Learn to recognize signs of stress in students: make students aware of campus resources that they can turn to for help if their grades are low or if they feel under pressure.
- Ensure equal access to study materials (assignments, exams, old homework assignments).
- Make sure that students feel they can succeed in your class without having to resort to dishonesty: encourage students to come talk with you if they are having difficulties.
- Discuss alternatives to cheating:
  - The Academic Support and Disability Services Program at USC offers free tutoring and learning skills instruction, and computer-assisted instruction to USC students in many classes.
  - The Writing Center offers undergraduates help in composition. Tutors are available for 30-minute appointments; however, Writing Center consultants focus on content and will not edit grammar.

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### Giving Tests

- Define what you mean by “cheating.” Students generally assume that if you have not prohibited a specific strategy, it will be permitted.
- Make clear the consequences of cheating.
- Make sure that you or a designated departmental staff member is in the room at all times.
- Seat students in alternate chairs if space allows – have students place personal belongings on the floor rather than on empty seats.
- Make certain that students have cleared the memories on their calculators.
- Supply scratch paper.
- Collect exams from students: do not allow students to rush chaotically to return their bluebooks.
- If the class is large, require students to sign an attendance sheet when they return their exams: count those present at the exam to make certain that the number of examinees matches the number of exams.



### *Examinations*

- Change exam questions as often as is practical.
- Return exams and assignments to students in person.
- Keep exams, grade books and rosters safe in a locked cabinet.

### **Essays and Papers**

- Discuss the concept of plagiarism. Clarify the distinctions between plagiarism, paraphrases, and direct citations. Clarify your expectations regarding the use of outside sources, and the proper procedures for crediting those sources.
- Assign specific topics that are likely to require new research or that stress “thinking about” rather than “looking up.”
- Limit students’ choices of broad topics (avoids their turning to commercially produced term papers).
- Change the topics or assignments from semester to semester (prevents students from appropriating an essay from someone who has already taken the course).

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### **Demystifying Writing**

- Give a short lecture on how to research and write a paper or essay (librarians can assist you significantly by offering a class on how to research a topic).
- Discuss openly in class the difficulties of writing: help students understand that the anxieties or blocks they face are a normal part of the writing process.
- During the semester schedule a variety of short in-class papers: such assignments help students develop their writing skills and help determine their abilities. Instructors who assign only one paper per semester have a hard time judging whether that assignment is the student’s own work.
- Early in the course require students to discuss with you their research or essay topic. Later in the course ask them to share outlines and how they plan to organize their ideas or findings. This approach not only helps students write better papers, but also allows you to see students’ ideas develop.



### Preparing and Submitting Papers

- Discuss tutoring and proofreading: is it acceptable in your class for a student to have someone (or a computer) check assignments for spelling and grammatical errors? What about correcting awkward sentence structure? Is it acceptable for a “proofreader” to make changes to a student’s paper?
- Request that final versions of papers be handed in with drafts – ask for outlines as well.
- Specify the format for papers: Instructions for the style of the headings, footnotes, margins, and other editorial requirements discourage students from purchasing commercial papers.
- Collect papers from students during class. If papers are turned in a department or faculty office, provide the name of the individual responsible for the collection of the papers.
- Keep a copy of the corrected papers with your comments: to consult the next time you teach to identify possible pirated papers.
- Be aware of electronic “paper mills.” A good article on this topic is Bruce Lelans’s “Plagiarism and the Web” < <http://www.wiu.edu/users/mfbhl/wiu/plagiarism.htm>>.

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### Resources

Each TA should receive a copy of the student guidebook, SCampus (available online at <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS>), which contains the Student Conduct Code and other policies that constitute the university’s contract with students. In addition, the booklet, Trojan Integrity – A Faculty Desk Reference, includes strategies for preventing and confronting academic dishonesty as well as the process for reporting incidents to the Office for Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards. Student publications on academic dishonesty and avoiding plagiarism are available for distribution in your classes. Copies of all resources are available from the Office for Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/>).

### Sources

“What is Academic Dishonesty” and “Preventing Student Academic Dishonesty – Tips for Instructors.” (1996). In Teaching Resources Guide 1996-1997 (pp. 77-78 and 80-82, respectively). Irvine, CA: Instructional Resources Center, University of California.

Rhoten, Sandy. (1999). “Academic Dishonesty,” in Teaching Nuggets 1999 (p. 75). Los Angeles: Center for Excellence in Teaching, University of Southern California.