

A Student's Guide to Academic Integrity at OU

What is academic integrity?

Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Academic assignments exist to help students learn; grades exist to show how fully this goal is attained. Therefore all work and all grades should result from the student's own understanding and effort.

Why does OU care about academic integrity?

In a world where one scandal emerges after another, a reputation of integrity is priceless. Since the establishment of the University in 1890, OU has worked to build a reputation that students, faculty & staff, the administration, and alumni can be proud of. It is the value of the OU degree that provides OU students the best internships, jobs and graduate school opportunities. It takes only a minute to destroy a reputation of integrity. Students must understand the importance of integrity both personally and professionally.

How does OU support academic integrity?

Since 2011, the Academic Integrity Code has given students major responsibility for the OU community's academic integrity system. The responsible student organization is the Integrity Council. Its official duties include chairing academic misconduct hearings, conducting investigations for reported acts of academic misconduct, reviewing actual academic misconduct cases and recommending sanctions, and serving as peer educators in integrity training for students who have violated the Academic Integrity Code. The Integrity Council website is <http://integrity.ou.edu>.

The Office of Academic Integrity Programs (OAIP) supports and advises the Integrity Council. OAIP offices are currently located in the Provost's Office in Evans Hall, but will soon relocate to the third floor of Carnegie Hall. The main functions of this office are to promote academic integrity on campus, manage the academic misconduct system, and advise the Integrity Council.

What is academic misconduct?

Academic misconduct is any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement. Misconduct occurs when the student either knows or reasonably should know that the act constitutes misconduct. "I didn't mean to" is never an excuse for academic misconduct.

- **CHEATING AND UNAUTHORIZED MATERIAL ON EXAMINATIONS AND OTHER ASSIGNMENTS**

Unless the professor specifies otherwise, all examinations and other assignments are to be completed by the student alone, without inappropriate assistance of any kind. For tests, that means no help is to be given to or received from other persons; no books, notes, cellphones, iPods, calculators, or other materials or devices of any kind are to be consulted; and if a calculator or other hand-held electronic device is permitted to be used for mathematical calculations, no other information may be programmed into or retrieved from the device.

- **IMPROPER COLLABORATION**

Collaboration means working together. Many classes emphasize working with a partner or in groups. Permission from the professor to "work together" on a homework assignment, project, or paper is not permission to violate the rules of integrity by simply getting the answers from someone else or presenting another student's work as your own. Unless the professor specifies otherwise, it is assumed that all work submitted for a grade will be the product of the student's own understanding, and thus expressed in the student's own words, calculations, computer code, etc. When a student's work is identical or very similar to someone else's at points where individual variations in expression would be expected, it is reasonable for the professor to conclude that academic misconduct has occurred.

- **ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT IN ONLINE COURSES**

Online assignments are subject to exactly the same standards of integrity that apply in regular classroom assignments. Unless specifically permitted by the instructor, it is cheating to copy from others or from outside sources on any online quiz, homework, or test.

- **SUBMITTING THE SAME ASSIGNMENT FOR DIFFERENT CLASSES**

Submitting the same assignment for a second class violates the assumption that every assignment advances a student's learning and growth. Unless the second instructor expressly allows it, submitting an assignment already submitted for another class is a form of academic misconduct. This is also known as self-plagiarism or recycling work.

- **FABRICATION, FORGERY, ALTERATION OF DOCUMENTS, LYING, ETC., IN ORDER TO OBTAIN ACADEMIC ADVANTAGE**

It's wrong to lie to an instructor in order to get an excused absence, an extension on a due date, a makeup examination, an Incomplete, admission to a class or program, etc. It's wrong to forge an instructor's signature on drop slips, or anywhere else for academic advantage. It's wrong to falsify transcripts and diplomas. It's wrong to fake data, for example in an assigned lab project, or fabricate quotations or sources for a paper. The person who lies to get out of a difficult situation usually feels that there's nothing personal about it. The person who gets lied to feels differently. All of these actions destroy the institution's integrity and eat away at the expectation of mutual trust among all members of the academic community.

- **ASSISTING OTHERS IN ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

Helping someone else cheat is itself an Academic Integrity Code violation. So is providing someone with a paper or homework, or any other form of help, where you know, or reasonably should know that the other student will use it to cheat.

- **ATTEMPTING TO COMMIT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

Trying to cheat is academic misconduct, even if the attempt is discovered before it is completed. For example, possession of unauthorized notes in an examination is academic misconduct, even if they have not yet been used. Asking others for help in cheating is academic misconduct even if nobody responds and no cheating ultimately occurs.

- **DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, HACKING, ETC.**

It is an Academic Integrity Code violation to steal or destroy other students' work if the action will foreseeably lead to an academic advantage for oneself. The same is true for gaining unauthorized access to faculty offices, email accounts, or course management services in order to alter grades, access examinations, or otherwise gain improper academic advantage.

- **INTIMIDATION AND INTERFERENCE WITH INTEGRITY PROCESSES**

Interfering with the proper functioning of the Academic Integrity Code is also a violation of the Code. For example, it is a violation to threaten or bribe someone to prevent that person from reporting misconduct or testifying in a hearing. It is also a violation to interfere with an Integrity Council investigation or lie to an investigator or other official. Student Code violations may also apply to such conduct. Once the investigation is over, retaliation against someone for reporting misconduct or participating in an investigation or hearing will ordinarily be addressed through the Student Code.

- **PLAGIARISM**

There is basically no college-level assignment that can be satisfactorily completed by copying. OU's basic assumption about writing is that all written assignments show the student's own understanding in the student's own words. That means all writing assignments, in class or out, are assumed to be composed entirely of words generated (not simply found) by the student, except where words written by someone else are specifically marked as such with proper citation. Including other people's words in your paper is helpful when you do it honestly and correctly. When you don't, it's plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the most common form of academic misconduct at OU. Students are encouraged to test their skills in avoiding plagiarism by taking the library's plagiarism tutorial, available at <http://libraries.ou.edu/help/tutorials/academicintegrity/player.html>. Within the academic community and specifically at the University of Oklahoma, the following rules apply:

- 1. IT IS PLAGIARISM TO COPY WORDS AND PRESENT THEM AS YOUR OWN WRITING.** It is the worst form of plagiarism to copy part or all of a paper from the Internet, from a book, or from another source without indicating in any way that the words are someone else's. To avoid this form of plagiarism, the paper must BOTH place the quoted material in quotation marks AND use an acceptable form of citation to indicate where the words come from.
- 2. IT IS PLAGIARISM TO COPY WORDS, EVEN IF YOU GIVE THE SOURCE, UNLESS YOU ALSO INDICATE THAT THE COPIED WORDS ARE A DIRECT QUOTATION.** Simply documenting the source in a footnote or bibliography isn't good enough. You must also indicate that the words themselves are quoted from someone else. To avoid this form of plagiarism, put all quoted words in quotation marks or use equivalent punctuation.
- 3. IT IS PLAGIARISM TO COPY WORDS AND THEN CHANGE THEM A LITTLE, EVEN IF YOU GIVE THE SOURCE.** Putting someone else's ideas into your own words so it's not a direct quotation is called "paraphrasing." Paraphrasing is fine when you cite the source and indicate the new expression is actually your own. When it's not -- when the expression remains substantially similar to the source as a whole or in one of its parts -- it's plagiarism. Even if not specifically prohibited by the instructor, "writing" a paper by copying words and then altering them violates OU's basic assumption about writing and may easily result in a charge of academic misconduct. To count as "your own words," your paper must be so significantly different from your sources that a reasonable reader would consider it a new piece of writing. If it's not -- if "your writing" is substantially similar to somebody else's where individual variations would be expected, it's plagiarism.
- 4. EVEN IF YOU EXPRESS THEM IN YOUR OWN WORDS, IT IS PLAGIARISM TO PRESENT SOMEONE ELSE'S IDEAS AS YOUR OWN.** It is plagiarism to present someone else's original arguments, lines of reasoning, or factual discoveries as your own, even if you put the material in your own words. To avoid this form of plagiarism, cite the source.
- 5. THE RULES AGAINST PLAGIARISM APPLY TO ALL ASSIGNMENTS.** Take-home tests, comprehensive examinations, "review of the literature" sections of theses or dissertations, and all other assignments are subject to these rules. There is basically no college-level assignment that can be satisfactorily completed by copying.

How can students report academic misconduct?

Integrity matters to everyone, so OU's academic integrity system lets anyone -- not just professors -- report cheating. Anyone with a concern about cheating can contact the Integrity Council via its website, <http://integrity.ou.edu>. Once a possible violation is discovered, a report should ordinarily be filed within 15 class days of discovering the academic misconduct. For other questions on reporting, OAIP can be contacted directly at (405) 325-3224 or integrity@ou.edu.

What happens when a student is reported for academic misconduct?

Reports of academic misconduct fall into two categories: the admonition and the full violation.

- An "admonition" is essentially a warning by the professor that may result only in a grade reduction that does not exceed the value of the assignment in question. There are no University penalties with admonitions. A first offense is not automatically treated as an admonition. Admonitions are for lesser offenses only and are not appropriate for egregious academic misconduct including, but not limited to, cumulative examinations, semester-long assignments, or for graduate-level assignments such as general examinations. Ordinarily no student should receive more than one admonition. If a student has previously received an admonition and a second admonition is reported or if the misconduct is egregious enough to be treated as a full violation, OAIP has the authority to increase admonitions to full violations per Sec. 3.2 of the Academic Integrity Code. Admonitions are not considered an adjudication of academic misconduct and are not reportable outside of the University. However, in any subsequent academic misconduct proceeding, the admonition will establish the student's familiarity with academic integrity standards.
- A full violation, formerly known as a "charge," can result in both a grade penalty and a University sanction. After being notified of a reported violation, students will be required to meet with OAIP. In this meeting, OAIP will explain to the student his or her rights in the process, go over what he or she was reported for, answer any questions he or she may have, and, if the student admits to the reported violation, issue a University sanction. Regardless of what University sanction is issued, all violations become a part of the student's permanent educational record.

Every student that has been reported for either an admonition or a full violation will be sent a notification by OAIP via email through their University email addresses. If a student has been reported for a full violation, the student must contact OAIP to schedule a face-to-face meeting within 10 class days of receiving notice of the reported violation. Failure to do so can result in the issuance of a sanction that may include suspension or expulsion from the University.

"I did it!" – Admitting to a report of academic misconduct

Taking responsibility for one's actions shows maturity and integrity. A student who is willing to admit to a report is not guaranteed a lesser penalty, but accepting responsibility is one factor considered in determining an appropriate sanction. Everyone makes mistakes. It's what you do afterwards that determines who you are.

“I didn’t do it!” – Contesting a report of academic misconduct

Students have the right to contest all reported admonitions and violations. The first step in contesting either one is to request an investigation as described below. Every student who has been reported also has a right to an advisor. Free counsel is provided by UOSA General Counsel, located in the Conoco Student Leadership Wing of the Oklahoma Memorial Union, email uosagc@ou.edu, telephone at (405) 325-5474.

Investigations

Every student reported for violating the Academic Integrity code has the right to an investigation led by the Integrity Council. Investigations can also be requested by professors or by OAIP. The purpose of the investigation is to gather evidence about the report. During the investigation, a student will have a grade of “N” as a temporary neutral grade until the matter is resolved. Following the investigation, the investigators shall issue a written report regarding their findings as to whether or not there is sufficient evidence to proceed to a hearing. If the investigators find there is insufficient evidence, the case will be dismissed. If sufficient evidence is found, the student may elect to proceed to a hearing.

For more detailed procedures on reporting and investigations, please see <http://integrity.ou.edu/files/InvestigationProcedures.pdf>.

Hearings

If the investigation finds evidence sufficient to support the report, a student may request a hearing. A hearing panel is made up of five members: three students and two faculty members.

In every hearing, students are entitled to a presumption of innocence. Responsibility for misconduct must be established by a preponderance of the evidence or the case will be dismissed. During the hearing, both the panel and the student will ordinarily have the opportunity to question all witnesses involved in the matter. The student will also have the opportunity to make a personal statement regarding the report.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the panel shall deliberate and determine by a majority vote whether the student is responsible for the reported act of academic misconduct. For more detailed procedures on hearings, please see <http://integrity.ou.edu/files/HearingProcedures.pdf>.

What kind of penalties can result from cheating?

With a full violation, there are two parts to the resulting penalty: the grade penalty and the University penalty. The grade penalty is imposed by the instructor. With full violations, the grade penalty can range from a lower grade on the affected work to an F in the course. In some cases, the professor may require extra work before the course can be completed. With admonitions, the grade penalty is limited to no credit on the assignment in question.

The University penalty, or sanction, is imposed separately from the grade penalty. University sanctions range from a censure (an official reprimand recorded as a note in the student's file), to classes or tutorials on integrity-related topics, to suspension for one or more semesters, to expulsion in the case of repeat or especially bad offenses.

There are two different remedial classes that can be assigned as University sanctions. One class is specifically geared toward avoiding plagiarism. If a student is required to take this course as a sanction, the course must be completed before the academic misconduct case can be concluded. Another class is focused on integrity training and is called "Do You Understand Integrity?" This class is in lieu of suspension, meaning that if a student agrees to take this class but fails to successfully complete any aspect of the integrity training, the student will be suspended for the following semester. Both classes qualify as a one-credit hour elective, and regular tuition and fees apply.

Suspensions from the University are for an entire semester or other academic term. Suspensions and expulsions are noted on the student's transcript. At the University's option, transcript notations can be temporary or permanent. Even if it is not noted on the transcript, a violation becomes a permanent part of the student's educational record. Students intending to apply to post-graduate programs such as law school or medical school should be particularly aware of disclosure requirements for those programs.

For more information on how penalties are assigned, please see http://integrity.ou.edu/files/how_penalties_are_assigned.pdf.