

Promoting and Preserving Academic Integrity in IAH Courses

The following discussion is not intended to be prescriptive. Instead, our hope is that this document will offer advice about academic integrity for faculty teaching, or preparing to teach, IAH courses. We would also highly recommend faculty to consult the following pages available on the MSU Ombudsman's website (<http://www.msu.edu/~ombud/>).

What are MSU's policies regarding plagiarism

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/plagiarism.html>

MSU Regulations, Ordinances and Policies Regarding Academic Honesty and Integrity

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/RegsOrdsPolicies.html>

Cheating from Where the Instructor Sits

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestyFAQ.html>

Cheating from Where the Student Sits

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestystud.html>

Frequently Asked Questions about Course Syllabi

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/syllabi.html>

According to Professor James E. Porter (WRAC), the best way to prevent plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty is to promote academic integrity. In "Discourage Plagiarism by Promoting Academic Honesty,"* Porter offers four suggestions (italicized below) for faculty interested in promoting academic integrity in their courses.

- 1. Have a clear policy regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty that you present early, discuss seriously, and implement consistently.*
- 2. Recognize that plagiarism is complicated. It is a topic that needs to be taught (not simple knowledge that can be assumed).*
- 3. Design writing assignments and respond to student writing in ways that discourage plagiarism.*
- 4. Stress a positive ethic of collaboration and acceptable use of others' work/writing (vs. a punitive approach). Stress the necessity of an ethic of fair use in a community of researchers and scholars.*

Although MSU does not require that course syllabi include a policy statement about plagiarism and academic dishonesty, CISAH strongly encourages all faculty teaching an

* http://kairos.wide.msu.edu/porter/teach_plagiarism.pdf

IAH course to include in the course syllabus a clear and specific policy regarding academic integrity. Since university policy places the burden of proof on faculty members in cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, including an academic integrity policy statement in the syllabus will demonstrate the faculty member's intent to take plagiarism and academic dishonesty seriously in the course. You may want to consider using or adapting one of the following policy statements. The first statement has been required by CISAH to be included in the syllabi for all sections of IAH courses taught by graduate teaching assistants:

In accordance with MSU's policies on "Protection of Scholarship and Grades" and "Integrity of Scholarship and Grades," students in IAH 201 are expected to honor principles of truth and honesty in their academic work. Academic honesty entails, among other things, that students will not plagiarize. This means (1) students will not submit someone else's work as their own (e.g., they will not submit another student's paper or video, etc., nor will they hand in a paper copied from the web or another published source). Academic honesty also means students (2) will not knowingly permit another student to copy and submit their work as that student's own and (3) will not use unacknowledged quotations or paraphrases as part of their work. As provided by university policy, such academic dishonesty or plagiarism may be penalized by a failing grade on the assignment or for the course. Failure in a course as a result of academic dishonesty will also result in written notification to the student's academic dean of the circumstances. Additional discussion of cheating or academic dishonesty is available on the Ombudsman's webpage: <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestystud.html>.

Second, the university ombudsman's office recommends the following statement:

Academic Honesty: Article 2.3.3 of the [Academic Freedom Report](#)* states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, *Protection of Scholarship and Grades*; the all-University Policy on *Integrity of Scholarship and Grades*; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See [Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide](#)* and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu.) Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in (insert course number here). Students who violate MSU rules may

* <http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/>

receive a penalty grade, including--but not limited to--a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>.)

In addition to including an academic integrity policy statement in the syllabus, it is also helpful to discuss early (perhaps as part of the course introduction on the first day of class) what the faculty member considers academic dishonesty to be. The more specific the course policy and the earlier students in a course understand the policy and the faculty member's intent to implement it consistently, the more likely students will be discouraged from plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Faculty may find the language of Article 1 of MSU's General Student Regulations helpful in this regard.

The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to the educational process and the academic integrity of the University; therefore, no student shall:

- 1.01 claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.
- 1.02 procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.
- 1.03 complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.
- 1.04 allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.
- 1.05 alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.
- 1.06 fabricate or falsify data or results.

One of the most common responses by faculty members encountering plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty is that students should know better. Many times, faculty assume that students know what constitutes plagiarism or that cheating is wrong. But while students may have a general impression that academic dishonesty is wrong, they are often more uncertain than faculty realize about what specifically constitutes academic dishonesty. In addition, students in general education courses like those offered by IAH vary greatly in their understandings of academic integrity and what constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

On the one hand, virtually all students understand that copying answers to an exam from a classmate or submitting someone else's essay for a writing assignment is dishonest and wrong. On the other hand, the same students are often confused about the difference between paraphrase and plagiarism, or how to document the use of sources correctly, or whether a group study session is an appropriate venue for preparing answers to a take-home exam. The availability of information via the Internet has only exacerbated the problem. All too often, students think that since the Internet is free and available to all, information derived from the Internet is in the public domain and therefore need not be

documented when used for course assignments. And some students are confused by what they perceive to be different standards at the high school level (“But my high school teacher taught us to do that...”) and what’s expected at the post-secondary level (“Well, this isn’t high school...”).

So rather than assume that students know better, faculty teaching general education courses like IAH courses need to offer instruction in their classes about what is academically honest and what is not. This is especially true in writing assignments. As Professor Porter notes, students need to be taught how to cite and document the use of sources according to discipline-specific conventions (like MLA, or APA, or Chicago), as well as how to properly paraphrase source material. Whether students were taught this in high school and/or in a first-year college writing course, they often need to be taught again—or reminded about—what is expected and how they should achieve those expectations. (Just as “practice makes perfect,” so too repeated instruction about plagiarism and cheating will help to promote academic integrity.) In this regard, faculty may find it helpful to use specific examples to demonstrate the difference between an acceptable paraphrase and one that constitutes plagiarism, or the difference between sloppy citation or documentation and plagiarism. The following web sites offer useful examples:

Academic Integrity at Princeton

<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/pages/plagiarism.html>

Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

Instruction about academic integrity need not consume a substantial amount of class time. But CISAH strongly recommends that some such instruction should be offered to students in IAH courses. Often times, this instruction is most effective when coupled with a specific assignment or series of assignments. For example, instruction about proper documentation and correct paraphrasing would be especially effective when provided in the class before a major writing assignment is due (perhaps in a recitation taught by a TA). What is important, however, is that faculty not assume that the students in IAH courses know how to use and properly document sources, nor what that faculty member’s expectations are in this regard.

In addition to providing some instruction about academic integrity, faculty may also want to consider distinguishing between categories of academic dishonesty and how to respond to instances of each category. According to university policy, students may be penalized for academic dishonesty by failing the assignment or failing the course. However, while the university may stipulate what constitutes academic dishonesty, it does not mandate a specific penalty for a specific offense against academic integrity. Instead, each faculty member is responsible for determining which offenses will receive which penalties. CISAH recommends that each faculty member teaching an IAH course should develop such a policy as part of designing the course (rather than creating a policy retroactively after a case of academic dishonesty is encountered in the course).

By way of example, CISAH developed the following policy for use in IAH courses taught by TAs:

Offense: submitting someone else's work as one's own; that is, copying another student's course paper or other work, copying or buying a paper off the Internet, or copying from a published source such that all or most of the paper is the work of someone other than the student's

Penalty: failure in the course and written notification of the student's academic dean regarding the circumstances of the case

Offense: knowingly allowing another student to copy and submit's one's work as that student's own

Penalty: failure in the course and written notification of the student's academic dean regarding the circumstances of the case

Offense: unacknowledged quotation or paraphrase of sources in portions of the paper or other work (that is, no citation given)

Penalty: failure on the assignment with no opportunity to make up the credit (unless there are extenuating circumstances)

Offense: inept or insufficient paraphrase of original in passages for which citation is provided

Penalty: for first occurrence, no credit for the assignment until the student receives instruction in paraphrasing and revises the assignment; for any subsequent occurrences, failure on the assignment with no opportunity to make up the credit

CISAH does not advocate that such a policy should be explicitly stated in the syllabus or even explained orally in class since to do so may lead some students to take advantage of the policy (by, for example, intentionally manipulating paraphrases but citing them in the hope that, if caught, appeal could be made to the policy). Instead, CISAH recommends that faculty develop their own policies in advance to guide decisions regarding specific cases of academic dishonesty.

We recommend the following procedure for handling suspect assignments in IAH courses:

1. Make two copies of the essay before returning it to the student.
2. Return the student's essay at the same time essays are returned to the class (that is, don't withhold the paper and thereby draw attention to the student in class). Attach a note to the essay stating something like, "I'm unable to grade this paper. Please make an appointment to meet with me."
 - Prior to the middle of the semester a student receiving such a message from you, might seek to avoid penalty for evident plagiarism by immediately dropping the course. If you wish to prevent this, you should contact the CISAH director, who will ask the associate dean to put a hold

on the student's registration until the situation has been resolved. This hold will prevent the student from simply dropping the course and will allow you to have a discussion with the student about the paper. Once a decision has been made about the case, notify the CISAH director that the hold may be lifted. If the decision is that the plagiarism is serious enough to warrant failure in the course, a 0.0 in the course will be recorded at that time. (After the middle of the semester, students are not easily able to drop courses.)

3. On one of the copies you made, highlight those portions of the text that are plagiarized from a source. Also, print out the plagiarized source and highlight the plagiarized passages.
4. When meeting with the student, avoid accusing him/her of plagiarism. Rather, begin by presenting the student with highlighted copies and ask her/him to explain the similarities.
5. If you determine that the appropriate penalty for the plagiarism is to fail the student in the course (as opposed to failing the student on the assignment), you must send a letter to the student's dean explaining the circumstances. If the student has fewer than 60 credit hours (i.e., the student's year is identified as 1 or 2 on your class list), the letter goes to Dr. Bonita Pope Curry, director of the Undergraduate University Division.

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