

# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By coming to Yale, students have implicitly asked the College to help them develop a broadly based, highly disciplined intelligence, not just to learn material, but also to be guided toward a deep and supple understanding of the subjects they study. Course readings, lectures, and discussions are all crucial elements of this learning. Less obvious, perhaps, is what students' own writing contributes to this process. It may sometimes seem that exams, lab reports, and papers are meant primarily to measure how much has been learned. But when students complete written course work, they are not demonstrating what they have learned, but are rather doing the very work of synthesis and reflection that constitutes advanced learning. Every writer has had the experience of making discoveries while writing an essay. To have this discovery is to make knowledge, and making knowledge is what joins all students to the project of the university.

Those students who cheat forfeit the opportunity to make such discoveries. Certainly there are other reasons not to cheat. One who borrows unacknowledged ideas or language from others is stealing their work, which denies them their due credit and also impedes that free exchange of ideas on which the university depends. Yale regards cheating as a serious offense, for which the standard penalty is two semesters of suspension. But the much more grievous wrong is to the cheating student. Writing is one of the most powerful sites of learning; students who turn in someone else's work, therefore, are giving away the very substance of their educations.

College course work frequently requires that students build on previous scholarship or collaborate with other students. The following definitions help clarify the proper procedures for conducting and documenting such collaborations and the expectations of Yale College. For a fuller discussion of these issues, see the Writing Center website.

## A. MULTIPLE SUBMISSION

Students may not submit the same paper, or substantially the same paper, in more than one course. If topics for two courses coincide, a student must have written permission from both instructors before either combining work on two papers or revising an earlier paper for submission to a new course.

## B. CHEATING ON EXAMINATIONS

It is cheating to copy answers from other students or to refer without written permission to notes, books, laptop computers, cellular phones, or other programmable electronic devices. Likewise, the use of cellular phones to discuss or obtain answers from another student, whether present in the classroom or not, is prohibited.

It is also cheating to change answers on a returned examination and then request re-grading. It is the student's responsibility to submit the examination exactly as it was; any alteration is academic dishonesty.

For take-home examinations, and for examinations for which the questions are distributed in advance, instructors should make the rules clear, and students should obey them to the letter. If a student is in any doubt as to the meaning of the instructions governing such exercises, he or she should seek explicit clarification from the instructor. The ordinary expectation is that each student will prepare answers on his or her own; collaboration with others is acceptable only to the degree precisely and specifically described by the instructor. In all cases, the answer a student finally submits must represent his or her own understanding of the issues. If a student thinks that any answer or submission has been significantly influenced by consulting books or other people, he or she should say so, just as is required in a paper.

## C. PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were one's own. Thus most forms of cheating on examinations are plagiarism; but the term is usually used in reference to papers rather than examinations.

If one uses a source for a paper, one must acknowledge it. What counts as a source varies greatly depending on the assignment, but the list certainly includes readings, lectures, websites, conversations, interviews, and other students' papers. Every academic discipline has its own conventions for acknowledging sources. Instructors should make clear which conventions students must use. In all situations, students who are confused about the specific punctuation and formatting must nonetheless make clear in written work where they have borrowed from others – whether it be a matter of data, opinions, questions, ideas, or specific language. This obligation holds whether the sources are published or unpublished.

Submission of an entire paper prepared by someone else is an especially egregious form of plagiarism, and is grounds for the imposition of a particularly serious penalty, including expulsion from the University.

## D. PROBLEM SETS AND UNGRADED WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Many instructors assign work that allows students to practice and develop skills in a low-stakes format, less formal than a paper and often ungraded. Collaboration with other students is common practice in many such courses, but students are expected to ask instructors for a written explanation of what kinds of collaboration are appropriate.

## E. LABORATORY EXERCISES

Many laboratory reports are constructed on some form of exercise in which observations are made and the results of these observations tabulated or processed in some manner. There are three violations of originality that can occur with this form of assignment:

1. **Falsification of Data.** The practice known as "dry-labbing," constructing observations out of one's head or borrowing the observations of others as if they were one's own genuine data, is an offense of such gravity that—in the professional world—it results in total excommunication from the community of scientists. In undergraduate work the comparable sanction is suspension.
2. **Cooperation in Treatment of Data.** Often a class is given a common set of data with an assignment to analyze the data and report the results. Sometimes when extensive routine analyses must be made, it is tempting for students to organize so that the total work load is divided among several students. The ordinary assumption must be that this type of cooperation, however sensible it may seem, is strictly forbidden unless explicitly permitted by the instructor. The best policy is to ask at the time the assignment is made.
3. **Borrowing or Purchase of Material.** Submission of material, such as a chemical product, that a student does not obtain from actually performing the assigned experiment is a flagrant act of cheating. Purchasing the product in the marketplace, "borrowing some product" from a classmate, or obtaining a sample surreptitiously from another laboratory all constitute serious offenses. In the preparation of products by synthesis, using "excess starting materials" to promote a better yield of products is also cheating.

Finally, it should be reiterated that the prohibition of cheating and plagiarism is not meant to restrict either the free discussion and exchange of ideas among students or the study of other scholars' works. Such activities are the very essence of education. Nor are the rules of citation meant to engender a dependent mentality. Students are at Yale to study the work of others in order to learn to think for themselves. Those who follow that principle will never cheat or plagiarize.