Academic Integrity

Working with Others and Use of Materials

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When it comes to assignments, two issues regularly come up in the context of academic integrity:
- are students allowed to work together and to what degree?
- what materials are students allowed to use?

The following terminology can help avoid confusion, although it might be necessary to adjust wording for specific classes and assignments. In any case, it is helpful to establish a default which automatically applies if nothing specific is mentioned. Most instructors assume that the default for any assignment is that students have to work independently without any outside help. Students, however, do not necessarily share this view. Thus, you might want to include a statement like the following in your syllabus:

If not otherwise specified, you are expected to complete assignments on your own without any help from other individuals (other than an official tutor) and without any materials other than those mentioned as course materials in the syllabus or on Katie. The use of other materials or sources (e.g. from the Internet) and help from other students or individuals – if not specifically permitted – is a violation of academic integrity. **When in doubt, ask!**

The following are descriptions of five types of student-student interaction for assignments. Not all classes will require all five types. You can adjust the following descriptions as needed. Please remove lines with OPTIONAL and NOTE before use.

**Working with others**

Some instructors may wish to include a statement like the following in the syllabus:

When you submit work with your name on it, it is an acknowledgement that credit for the work belongs to you alone. If the work was a product of cooperation or collaboration, you are expected to clearly indicate in writing all persons who contributed to its completion.

> **Individual assignment (no work with others allowed)**
  - For this assignment, you may not work with any other student, talk about the assignment, or exchange notes and ideas.
  - You may not show your work to others or look at others’ work.
  - Official tutors are the only exception.

> **Discussion allowed**
  - You may discuss the assignment with peers.
  - Discussion means that all exchange has to be verbal. You may not take notes during the discussion and you may not have an electronic discussion (e.g. via text messages).
A posting on Facebook, for example, would not count as discussion, but as cooperation or collaboration.

- Sitting together, talking about the assignment and simultaneously taking notes would also not be considered a discussion in this context.
- You may, however, once the discussion is over, write down ideas and questions from the discussion as you remember them.

- Discussion is not a one-way-street: If another person is basically telling you what you do, it is not considered a discussion. Also, a discussion is not an exchange of answers.
- Be aware that some assignments might not allow for discussion.
- Instructors may require disclosure of all students with whom you discussed the assignment. Therefore, keep track of the people with whom you discussed the assignment.

OPTIONAL: Discussion of an assignment is restricted to current students of the course and official tutors.

NOTE: Instructors can specify that at least 5-10 minutes must elapse between a discussion and taking notes.

> Feedback allowed
- You may ask another student to give you feedback on an assignment. This is usually for a paper, an artifact, or a performance (usually not for exercises, problems, proofs, calculations, etc.).
- Feedback is usually given verbally.
  - Often, instructors require that you meet in person, i.e. you cannot simply send someone your paper and have them use the comment and track-changes function.
  - You might take notes when you meet, but the person giving feedback generally should not make any changes directly to the assignment.
  - For example, if a person is giving you feedback on a paper, they should read the paper, perhaps mark typos, but otherwise should not make changes to the paper.
- Feedback can be about the structure / organization of a paper, the logic of an argument, factual information, or aesthetic quality.
- Feedback differs from the other forms of working together as information is mostly flowing in one direction.
- Instructors may require disclosure of all students from whom you received feedback for the assignment. Therefore, keep track of the people who gave you feedback.

NOTE: Instructors sometimes limit feedback to current students of the course.

NOTE: Feedback for (in-class paper) workshops can follow different rules.

> Cooperation allowed
- You may cooperate with other students on an assignment.
- Cooperation means that you can help each other and work together on parts of the assignment.
  - For example, you might generate the relevant data, conduct the required experiment, and do the research together.
  - Usually, you can share notes, take notes while you talk about the assignment, and use electronic means of communication.
- However, you still have to complete the assignment on your own and hand it in individually.
  - This means that you usually do not write the entire report or essay together.
This also means that you may not share completed (or almost completed) assignments and that you may not simply share/exchange answers.

- As a rule of thumb, an assignment that allows cooperation should still be at least 2/3 your own work

- Often, cooperation is done within assigned groups, but sometimes student form groups by themselves.
  - If you cooperate with students outside of an assigned group-setting, you must list all students with whom you cooperated.
  - If students are assigned to cooperation groups, information usually should not be shared with students outside the group.

- In cooperation, students should make an effort to be fairly equally involved.
  - Cooperation is active. You cannot simply receive.
  - If one student can contribute only very little or not at all, this student should instead work with a tutor.

**OPTIONAL:** Cooperation on an assignment is restricted to current students of the course and official tutors.  
**OPTIONAL:** Cooperation on an assignment is restricted to assigned members of a group.  
**NOTE:** Students who cooperate on an assignment usually will have similar, but not identical, work. Depending on the type of assignment, the portion of individual work required can be up to 80% or as low as 50%.

> Collaboration allowed

- You may collaborate with other students on this assignment.
- Collaboration means that you can work together on all aspects of the assignment.
  - Your instructor will specify if you should submit one assignment for the entire group or individual versions of the assignment.
  - If you submit individual versions of the assignment, these might be very similar, but should not be identical.
- You may talk about the assignment, share notes and all materials connected to the assignment, work on it together and use electronic means of communication.
- Collaboration is very often done in assigned groups and should be done only within the group, i.e. information should not be shared with other groups or individuals.
  - If you form your own collaboration groups, you should list all students with whom you collaborated.

**OPTIONAL:** Collaboration on an assignment is restricted to current students of the course and official tutors.  
**OPTIONAL:** Collaboration on an assignment is restricted to assigned members of a group.  
**NOTE:** If students collaborate, they very often only submit one assignment for the entire group, and very often receive only one grade for it. If students have to submit individual versions of the assignment, these will be similar or even identical in large parts (often more than 50%, sometimes close to 100%).
Use of materials

The following is a description of four levels of use of materials for assignments. Not all classes will require all four.

> No materials allowed (including textbooks or personal classroom notes).

NOTE: This might be the requirement for take-home essays.

> Only class materials allowed

- **Allowed** are all materials mentioned in the syllabus, materials provided on Katie and personal/peer classroom notes
- **Not allowed** are all other materials, including materials from previous versions of the course, old tests/assignments, other students' homework, etc.

NOTE: Instructors might exclude peer classroom notes.

> Instructor approved supplemental materials allowed

- **Allowed** are all class materials as well as books, websites and other sources that offer legally obtainable related information and help; the use of those materials requires the permission of the instructor first.
- **Not allowed** are all sources that have not specifically been approved by the instructor.
- All supplemental materials must be referenced.

> Additional materials allowed

- **Allowed** are all legally obtainable materials.
- **Not allowed** are therefore materials protected by copyright or other laws, e.g. most Instructor’s Manuals, pirated electronic books, classified materials, private information from individuals not cleared for publication, illegal recordings of conversations, movies, or concerts, pictures and graphics with copyright, etc. For some courses, this might also include tests and materials from previous versions of the course.
- All additional materials must be referenced.
This information can also be shared with students:

How to protect Academic Integrity

Many violations of academic integrity occur because students do not know the correct way to do something, for example how to cite sources and how to work with information from a website. In other situations, students simply make poor decisions. Here are some suggestions for how to avoid academic dishonesty:

- Read the syllabus carefully. Seek clarification from your instructor regarding class policies, and whenever expectations about an assignment are unclear; do not just rely on other students for information.
- Always assume that you are expected to complete assignments independently unless your instructor indicates otherwise. Clarify what is expected of you when you are working on a group project.
- In group projects, determine whether you are expected to think about the assignment together and write it up on your own, or whether the report, problem set or paper itself is supposed to be a group effort. Clarify it with the instructor if you are unsure.
- Don’t wait until the night before to begin an assignment. Being rushed for time is not an excuse for cheating or plagiarism. Good time management also allows you to contact your instructor in case you have questions.
- Don’t share your assignments with others. If fellow students have a question, try to help... but copying your assignment won’t help them learn anything and you might get accused of academic dishonesty as well.
- Keep track of sources and learn how to cite properly. If you paraphrase or summarize what someone else said, you still have to attribute this information to them. When you do research and take notes that you will use later, use the letter “Q” or a different sign to denote the beginning and the end of the quotation so you don’t forget to cite the passage in your work. If in doubt, cite.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for an extension for an assignment. If you cannot submit an assignment on time, you’re better off taking a zero for it rather than copying/submitting someone else's work and being charged with academic dishonesty, which might hurt your course grade much more.
- For in-class exams, be cautious where you sit. Cover your answers and distance yourself from others to reduce temptation to look. Also, don’t look into your bag or use your cell phone during an exam in order to avoid the impression of cheating.