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Academic Integrity

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO AVOIDING PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

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Introduction

University students are expected to have a reasonable measure of self-discipline and maturity. While the University's teaching resources are available for help and guidance, and instructors and staff will make reasonable efforts to assist students with academic or other problems, the final responsibility for success or failure in academic studies rests with the students.

At times there may be considerable pressure to achieve high grades. Some students may be tempted to obtain grades by dishonest means. The integrity of the University and the degrees it awards are compromised by practices such as cheating and plagiarism. It is for this reason that university regulations are in place. They help to deter academic dishonesty and ensure fair consequences should these situations arise

Purpose

This document is meant to educate students on what constitutes academic dishonesty at Saint Mary's University, inform students on how to avoid such offences, and help students should they be charged with violating an academic integrity regulation.

Students are not always properly educated, particularly first year students, on what constitutes plagiarism and cheating. There is a pre-existing notion that everyone entering university is well informed on how to avoid such offences. The fact is many students were not taught what constitutes academic dishonesty or the consequences associated with this offence.

While all academic regulations are found in the Academic Calendar and the Registration Guide and serve as a good reference tool for students, this document is meant to be more reader friendly. ☺



Plagiarism

“The presentation of words, ideas or techniques of another as one’s own. Plagiarism is not restricted to literary works and applies to all forms of information or ideas that belong to another”.

Some examples include:

- quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing text without proper acknowledgement;
- paraphrasing too closely (changing only a few words or rearranging text);
- submitting the same work in more than one class without permission;
- downloading work from the internet and presenting it as your own;
- purchasing documentation and presenting it as one’s own work;
- sharing papers including the selling of essays, tests, or other assignments.



UNSURE ABOUT REFERENCING? THEN ASK!

Professors are usually more than willing to help students when it comes to proper referencing, especially if it avoids plagiarism. *The Writing Centre* and *Library* also provide help with referencing and there are hundreds of online tools that will help you cite your material properly. Remember, if they are not your ideas or words then reference.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING ACCUSATIONS OF PLAGIARISM

1. Acknowledge all assistance received, including help from friends or others in proofreading.
2. Do not lend your work to other students unless you are sure they will not use it dishonestly.
3. Know the specific rules of each assignment.
4. Keep a photocopy and electronic copy of all assignments, essays, and term projects you have handed in for grading until you have received your final mark.
5. Do not submit work that is not entirely yours e.g. using another student’s work.
6. Do not cite in your bibliography sources that you didn’t use in a particular assignment, essay or paper.
7. When saving copies of essays or papers on your computer, save the drafts under different names. This shows a record of your work developing.
8. An assignment you prepare for one class should never be submitted for credit in another class, without the permission from your instructor.
9. When in doubt, ask your professor. Do not rely on family or friends to interpret what is acceptable practice for a particular assignment.



A survey by the Psychological Record show that 36% of undergraduates have admitted to plagiarizing written material

Roig M. *Psychological Record*. 1997;47:113-122

Cheating

“The attempt to secure a grade by unethical means. Knowingly assisting someone to cheat is itself cheating”

Some examples include:

- impersonating someone during a test or exam;
- copying or sharing information during a test or exam;
- obtaining or looking at a copy of a test or exam before it is administered;
- unauthorized use of materials or technology;
- unauthorized collaboration between students when individual work is required.

REQUIRED TO WITHDRAW FOR NON-ACADEMIC REASONS... DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU

Cheating is a major problem among Canadian universities and it can have a lasting and negative impact on your university career. It's not worth risking your chance at a great education to gain a few marks on a test. A notation of academic dishonesty can even follow you into the job market and affect your chances of getting a good job.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHEATING

1. Do not sit near friends during a test or exam.
2. Do not look around the room while writing.
3. Cover up your answers so other can't see.
4. Do not take any notes or books into a test or exam unless previously authorized. If you're unsure, ask your professor.
5. Arrive on time.
6. Do not talk with other students during a test or exam.
7. If the manner in which a test, exam, or assignment is being administered seems inappropriate or inadequate, let the instructor know.
8. Report to the invigilator or instructor any unusual behaviour of other students writing a test or exam.



A recent survey by The Center for Academic Integrity found that almost 80% of college students admit to cheating at least once.

Donald L. McCabe. "CAI Assessment Project." Center for Academic Integrity, 2002.

Falsification

“It is an offence to falsify any academic record or to use a falsified record”

Some examples include:

- submitting a false excuse for missing a class, exam, etc.;
- falsifying course work (e.g. altering or making up data);
- changing the answers on a returned assignment and resubmitting it to be reevaluated;
- submitting false information on a university admission form or other documentation;
- misrepresentation of knowledge of a language by providing inaccurate or incomplete information about their linguistic educational history;
- non-disclosure of previous post-secondary enrolment;
- presentation of another’s credentials as one’s own.

In most instances a lie will eventually catch up with you, so it’s important to be truthful with the university, especially when it comes to academic records.

Tampering

“It is an offence to tamper with University library materials or computer system resources in any way which would deprive others of their use”.

Some examples include:

- destroying, hiding, or stealing library materials;
- altering or destroying university computer programs or files without authorization;
- accessing and altering official records without authorization.

While the university may seem to have an endless budget, funds are often quite scarce. Destroying files or materials not only costs the school money, it costs you as well.

Penalties

Academic dishonesty is one of the most severe offences a student can commit at university. There are a variety of factors that will influence how a professor or the University determines the punishment for a violation of academic regulations.

Was this the student’s first offence?

Was the offence intentional or accidental?

Is the student genuinely sorry for the offence?

Has the student been honest during the investigation?

The following are potential consequences if a student is charged and found guilty of violating an academic regulation.

- Repeat of the assignment that triggered the discipline
- A failing grade in the piece of work triggering the discipline
- Failure of a class or course
- Required withdraw for an academic term or year (up to three (3) years)
- Expulsion from the University
- Loss of a current or continuing scholarship or loss of eligibility to receive scholarships, prizes, or bursaries
- Removal from the Dean’s list
- Reduction in grade
- Degree, certificate or diploma being revoked

What to do if you're accused

You're probably going to feel frustrated and angry if you're accused of academic dishonesty; however, you have rights during this process and will have an opportunity to present your side of the story. Remember to be honest and to try and keep your emotions in check so that you don't say or do anything you may later regret.

Remember that you have a right to be informed about an allegation against you and have a right to see documents that support that allegation.



SO WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IF I'M ACCUSED?

1. In the case of a first offence, situations can often be resolved informally between the student and professor. You may both agree that no violation has occurred, agree to resubmit the work in question or agree to a reduction in grade on the assignment. A professor will contact you if he/she feels a violation has occurred and where possible this is the best time to resolve the issue.
2. If you cannot come to an informal resolution then the professor will seek a formal resolution through the Senate Academic Discipline Committee. This committee will consider allegations brought forward and both you and the professor will present your cases. Remember the burden of proof is on the University to show that in all likelihood a violation has occurred.
3. If after your hearing you feel the decision of the Academic Discipline Committee was unjust you have a right to appeal the disciplinary action (the penalty) or the decision itself (finding of fault).
4. You can pick up a Notice of Appeal Form from the Registrar's office and initiate the appeal process. The Appeal Board will hear all evidence and make a ruling. The finding and ruling of the Appeal Board will be binding and no further appeals may take place.

DON'T GO THROUGH THIS ALONE... SEEK HELP!

If your professor is unwilling to discuss the situation with you and is taking the matter personally then make sure you seek advice from another source. Department Chairs or the SMUSA VP Academic are a good place to start. It can be overwhelming after an accusation is laid, but remember that there is help available during this difficult time.

What if I suspect someone else of cheating?

If you suspect a fellow student of committing an academic offence you have several options.

- Talk to the student about your suspicions
- Report your concerns to a professor, chair, or dean
- Do nothing

Before you decide that doing nothing is the best option, take a moment to think about the importance of academic integrity at our school. If you feel a moral responsibility to make Saint Mary's University a more honest place then report the incident.

If you decide to approach another student about cheating make sure you're familiar with the policy on academic integrity. Also, make sure you have evidence supporting your claim. If you're worried about reporting the offence or talking with the student then consult with a friend or relative that you trust before pursuing the issue.

Remember that you can report your concerns anonymously and don't need to become personally involved.

Inappropriate Collaboration

This section is meant to explore collaboration between students and what is considered inappropriate collaboration.

WHAT IS COLLABORATION?

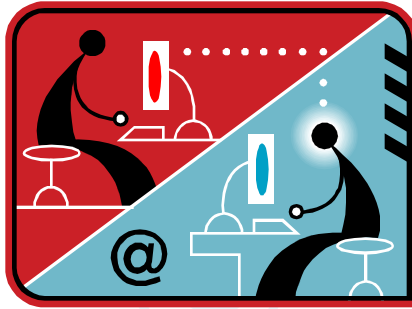
- Working on assignments together
- Checking homework answers of others
- Having another student help you write a paper
- Sharing sources for papers or take-home exams
- Working in a group for labs

WHEN IS COLLABORATION INAPPROPRIATE?

Students often work together on a variety of assignments, labs, and group projects. In many cases collaboration is appropriate and encouraged as it helps students learn from each other. However, if students share information or work together when a professor has asked that individual work be done, then this is considered inappropriate collaboration.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN?

Inappropriate collaboration falls under the heading of "Cheating" as an academic offence and can carry the same penalties.



Know the rules and you'll be fine

Reading rules and regulations aren't a pastime of most students, but knowing the policies in place at our school can save you from a lot of headaches during your university career. Knowledge is power so make sure you're informed!



"Better keep yourself clean and bright. You are the window through which you must see the world" George Bernard Shaw



DO WHAT YOU DO WELL

SMUSA would like to acknowledge the Registrar's Office for their generous contribution in creating this document and permission to use materials from the Academic Calendar and Registration Guide. We would also like to acknowledge permission to use materials from the University of Manitoba's "Cheating, Plagiarism and Fraud" publication.



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