



## Promoting Integrity and Preventing Academic Dishonesty

### **Establishing Guidelines**

Ensure your students know exactly what you consider dishonest and thus off limits.

Keep in mind that the following list is not exhaustive (new methods always arise) but make it clear that you expect your students to act in the spirit of honesty.

### **Academic Dishonesty Cheating** – Cheating includes but is not limited to:

- Copying from others
- Having or using notes, formulas or other information in a programmable calculator or other electronic device without explicit teacher review and permission.
- Having or using a communication device such as a cell phone, pager, PDA or electronic translator to send or obtain unauthorized information.
- Taking an exam for another student, or permitting someone else to take a test for you.
- Having or using a “cheat sheet” (a piece of paper with answers, formulas, information or notes of any kind) that is not specifically authorized by the teacher.
- Altering a graded exam and resubmitting it for a better grade.
- Working together on a take-home exam, unless specifically authorized by the teacher.
- Gaining or providing unauthorized access to exam materials.

### **Academic Dishonesty Plagiarism** - Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Giving or getting improper assistance on an assignment meant to be individual work. (When in doubt, ask.)
- Including in any assignment turned in for credit any materials not based on your own research and writing. This includes:
  - Using the services of a commercial term paper company.
  - Using the services of another student.
  - Copying part or all of another person’s paper and submitting it as your own for an assignment.
  - Acting as a provider of paper(s) for a student or students.
  - Submitting substantial portions of the same academic work for credit in more than one course without consulting both teachers (self-plagiarism).
- Failing to properly acknowledge paraphrased materials via attribution, footnotes, endnotes and/or a bibliography.
- Citing nonexistent sources such as articles or books.

### **Common Rationalizations for Cheating**

#### Rationalization #1

- *Everyone is cheating, so why can't I?*
- **Response:** It may seem like it, but not everyone cheats. Cheating is common in some schools, but you don't have to let cheaters bring you down to their level. Don't just go along with the crowd — lead them with the example of your honesty and integrity.

#### Rationalization #2

- *In the real world, cheaters prosper and honest people are left behind.*
- **Response:** Unfortunately, many people do get away with cheating and reap short-term benefits as a result. However, cheating demeans your character, destroys your honor and creates a

reputation that you are willing to do whatever you have to in order to win. This reputation lets others know you can't be trusted.

- And keep in mind that if you are caught cheating, you risk failing the test or assignment, and might face suspension, even expulsion. How prosperous is that?

#### Rationalization #3

- *My teacher grades on a curve, and some students cheat, so I must cheat to protect myself.*
- Response: As the Greek playwright Sophocles said, "Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud." Better to have a B or C earned honestly than an A earned through deceit. Sure, grades are important, but they're not the ultimate goal of education. Remember: when you fight fire with fire, you end up with the ashes of your integrity.

#### Rationalization #4

- *I need to cheat to get good grades to please my parents and get into a good college.*
- Response: Do you really think your parents would approve of compromising your integrity for a grade? And if you cheat your way into college, how do you expect to compete once you're there? More cheating? How will you get a job? Lie on your résumé? When will it stop?

#### Rationalization #5

- *I have so much work, I simply don't have time to study.*
- Response: Never sacrifice integrity for expediency. It's better to cut down your commitments than to take moral shortcuts that can have a lasting negative impact on your character and your future.

#### Rationalization #6

- *It doesn't matter if I cheat in classes that aren't important because I'll never need to know that stuff.*
- Response: Even if you don't see the value, it's your duty to live up to the expectations of academic integrity. If the assignment really is negligible, is it worth jeopardizing your reputation by cheating? A teacher in a difficult math course once told students on exam day, "Today you are taking two tests. One is in algebra and the other is in integrity. If you have to fail one of the tests, don't let it be in integrity."

#### Rationalization #7

- *The class is simply too difficult. I can't get the grade I need if I don't cheat.*
- Response: No one has a right to the grade they "need." In this world you are only entitled to the grade you earn. Furthermore, it is often hard to distinguish between what one really *needs* and what one simply *wants*. As German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche put it, "Necessity is not a fact. It's an interpretation."

#### Rationalization #8

- *When I cheat, no one gets hurt. If anything, I'm only cheating myself.*
- Response: There are several people who are harmed by cheating, including honest and legitimately qualified students who are put at a competitive disadvantage. If you cheat you are essentially lying to your teachers, college admissions officers and potential employers who rely on your grades as an accurate reflection of your competence. Cheaters also degrade the honor of their families, teachers and schools.

#### Rationalization #9

- *I only cheat a little bit, like writing down formulas, and I don't do it all the time. I'm basically an honest person.*
- Response: Just as a woman can't be a little bit pregnant, a student can't be a little bit dishonest. How many times do people get to lie before they are liars? Saying "I'm basically honest" simply means that you are willing to be honest unless it costs too much. People of character do the right thing even when it costs more than they want to pay. Furthermore, cheating is a slippery slope. It is a habit-forming coping mechanism: Once you begin rationalizing small infractions, it becomes easier to engage in big-league dishonesty and fraud.



## What You Can Do to Prevent Cheating and Plagiarism?

### Deterrents to Cheating Before a Test

- Provide equal access to information. Provide full and equal information to all students about what the test will cover and how it will be graded.
- Provide equal access to old exams. If former tests that can be useful as a study tool are available to anyone, make them available to everyone.
- Modify former questions. Change the wording of the question and reorder the answer choices on questions from previous exams.
- Create more than one version of the test.
- Create alternative or combined exams. If you have two or more classes that will be tested at different times, either find a way of combining the test in a single period, or prepare different tests for each class.
- Ensure blank exam booklets. Have each student turn in an empty booklet the day prior to the exam. Redistribute the books randomly on the day of the exam.
- Counsel students. Periodically, as well as immediately before the exam, explicitly discuss the rules and consequences.
- Encourage students to sign an Honor Pledge.
- Get parents involved.

### Deterrents to Cheating The Day of a Test

- Set up the room to make cheating difficult (e.g., have students sit at individual desks rather than group tables).
- Assign random seats. If possible leave empty seats scattered throughout the room.
- Prohibit all extraneous items. Require that all electronic devices—including cell phones, pagers, PDA's, earphones, radios, CD players, clocks and watches—be kept in students' backpacks in the back or front of the room for the duration of the exam. If scratch paper is needed, provide it with the exam.
- Restrict calculators. Allow calculators only when truly necessary. If possible, provide school calculators.
- Proctor the exam vigilantly. Proctors must not be sitting at a desk or doing any other work that distracts them from providing continuous supervision and observation.
- Continually and in random order walk down each row, watching the students work during the entire exam.
- Actively look for evidence and suggestions of cheating.
- Check students' hands for notes.
- Prohibit all talking and signaling.
- Require students to sign an acknowledgment. On or with the answer sheet should be the following statement signed by the student: **"I understand school policies concerning academic integrity and realize I will be subject to discipline if I violate any part of the policy. I affirm that I did not give or receive any assistance on this exam."**

### Preventing Plagiarism

- Construct assignments to deter copy-and-paste Internet plagiarism.
- Provide highly specific topics.
- Break the assignment into pieces and collect each step of the writing process.
- Have students write in class.

### Detecting Plagiarism

- Dead giveaways: Mixed citation styles, lack of citations; Signs of datedness; Inconsistencies in formatting and logic

### Preventing Plagiarism

- Require students to write out and sign an affirmation on their papers after completion and prior to submission.
- Sample affirmation:  
**I affirm on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment. I clearly understand the consequences established by the school should it be determined that the work I am submitting has been plagiarized from other sources.**
- Discuss with students what exactly constitutes plagiarism.
- Teach students how and when to cite resources properly.
- Frequently remind students of your plagiarism policy.
- Enforce consequences consistently.
- Be aware of free and fee-based term paper sites.
- Use plagiarism detection services and software.

### Reduce Pressures That Encourage Cheating

- Keep your expectations reasonable.
- Use clear grading criteria.
- Do not change grading criteria once students turn in assignments or tests.
- Make sure students understand the areas you will test them on.
- Create fair exams which reflect what was taught.
- Base the course grade on multiple assessments.
- Provide adequate time to complete assignments or exams.
- Accept valid excuses for late assignments and absences.
- Consider allowing students to prepare an authorized “cheat sheet,” one page or one index card of notes for use during the exam.
- Never “look the other way” when you notice an incident of academic dishonesty.
- Never let cheating become an accepted norm or allow a culture of tolerance toward cheating to develop.

### Challenges of Group Work

- Cooperative learning and other group work pose a special challenge when addressing the issue of cheating. Try these techniques:
- Make it clear to students what is and is not group work.
- Explain what they will be graded on: process (teamwork), product (outcome) or both
- Have as much of the group work take place in class as possible, to allow for first-hand observation.
- Have group members fill out a form for self-assessment.

*Adapted from the Josephson Institute of Ethics “Honor Above All” Manual.*

