

An Instructor's Guidebook to
ACADEMIC HONESTY
IN
THE CLASSROOM



Prepared by
The Las Positas College Academic Senate

Introduction

Although the vast majority of students at Las Positas College earn their grades honestly, it is a fact that a small number of students do attempt to pass courses in a way that gives them an unfair advantage. This can range from deliberate cheating (for example, copying exam answers from a neighboring student) to unintentional plagiarism (because the student does not understand what constitutes plagiarism).

The purpose of this booklet is to assist instructors in dealing with issues of academic honesty. This includes advice on establishing your own policy about academic honesty *before* any incidents occur, some common methods of cheating and how to prevent them, a discussion of your options as an instructor if you believe a student has cheated, the student's rights, and the due process procedure if students feel they have been unfairly accused of cheating. At the end of the booklet you will find contact information for the administrators mentioned herein.



Establishing your policy about academic honesty

One of the most proactive things you can do to promote academic honesty is to make your students aware at the start of the semester that you have an established academic honesty policy. Your policy should be part of the course syllabus and it should discuss these three subjects clearly:

- Your definition of academic honesty
- Your expectations of academic honesty
- The consequences of cheating (what actions you will take if a student cheats)

The Las Positas College Academic Senate has prepared a statement on academic honesty that instructors are free to adopt. The Senate's statement defines cheating and plagiarism in detail and makes clear that academic honesty is expected from all Las Positas College students. The full statement appears on the next four pages. If you wish to adopt the Senate's statement as your own, you can include in the section of your syllabus that deals with academic honesty a reference to the statement's address on the web:

http://www.laspositascollege.edu/services/honesty_statement.htm

Academic Honesty Statement of the Las Positas College Academic Senate

Las Positas College promotes student success by providing high quality instruction and learning resources. The primary factor in student success, however, is the student's devotion of considerable time and energy to the learning process. A high grade in a Las Positas College course is, therefore, something of which both the college and the student can be proud. It indicates mastery of the material achieved through hard work.

Any form of academic dishonesty, whether cheating or plagiarism, undermines the value of grades for the entire student body and the College as a whole. It is an affront to every student who has labored to achieve success honestly and a threat to the College's reputation for academic excellence. For these reasons, the College does not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. Any student attempting to gain an unfair advantage in a course will be severely penalized, up to and including suspension from classes. The actions taken against the student will also be permanently entered into the student's record in the case of repeated, flagrant, or serious incidents.

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Cheating is defined as fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in an academic assignment. It may involve:

- *Copying or attempting to copy from others during an examination or for an assignment;*
- *Communicating examination information to, or receiving such information from, another person during an examination;*
- *Preprogramming a calculator or computer to contain answers or other unauthorized information for examinations;*
- *Using, attempting to use, or assisting others in using materials that are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment or examination in question, such as: books, Web sites, prepared answers, written notes, or concealed information;*
- *Allowing others to do one's assignment or a portion of one's assignment or using a commercial term paper service;*
- *Altering examination answers after an assignment has been completed or altering recorded grades; and*
- *Resubmitting a previously written assignment for a new course without the permission of the instructor.*

Plagiarism is defined as using another's work (whether printed, electronic, or spoken) without crediting him or her. Whereas cheating is almost always intentional, students sometimes plagiarize accidentally. It is vital, therefore, for students to understand the many different kinds of actions that constitute plagiarism:

- *Submitting the whole of another's work as one's own (see the definition of "cheating" above: this includes submitting another student's paper or a paper obtained from a commercial term paper service as one's own);*
- *Using the exact wording of a source without putting that wording in quotation marks and citing it;*
- *Paraphrasing the wording of a source without citing it;*
- *Inadequately paraphrasing the wording of a source (not only the words, but the sentence structure of the original must be changed);*
- *Summarizing the ideas of a source without citing it; and*
- *Overusing the ideas of a source, so that those ideas make up the majority of one's work.*

From discipline to discipline and course to course, students will find that instructors will sometimes use teaching tools like modeling (in which the student is asked to "model" his or her writing after another's) or collaboration (in which students co-write or share ideas for an assignment) that seem very close to plagiarism. In cases like these, the instructor will be very careful to emphasize that the "use of another's work" is occurring within the specific parameters of the assignment. Such use should not occur in other contexts or without the supervision and consent of an instructor.¹

¹ Definition of plagiarism influenced in part by the academic honesty policies of Ohlone College, Fremont California and Hamilton College, Clinton New York; by "What is Plagiarism," *Turnitin.com* Oakland: iParadigms, 2003. 10 Feb. 2004 <http://www.turnitin.com/research_site/e_what_is_p_text_sub.html>; and by Robert A. Harris, *The Plagiarism Handbook* (Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing, 2001).

Forms of cheating and countermeasures

Instructors should be familiar with common methods of cheating in order to be proactive in preventing them and recognizing them if they do occur.

A list of cheating methods is presented below. After each method, some preventative measures are listed. In general, however, instructors can prevent most forms of cheating by simply being vigilant, patrolling the room during exams, and allowing only an exam and a pencil on the desktop.

Glancing at a neighbor's papers during an exam.

- Be vigilant during the exam for excessive glancing. Ask students to remove hats and sunglasses in order to better see where the students are looking.
- Seat the students as far apart as possible, ideally with empty desks between students.
- Make two versions of the exam, with different questions or at least a different ordering of questions. Each student should be given a version of the exam that is different from his or her neighbor's.
- While the students are taking an exam, make a map of the location of each student in the classroom (in other words, write down who is seated next to whom). When you grade the exams, grade the exams of neighboring students together. This will allow you to compare the work of neighboring students side by side in order to better spot similar answers.

Bringing a page of notes (a "cheat sheet") into an exam.

- Print the exam on non-white paper in order to make a cheat sheet stand out more readily.
- Patrol the desk rows during the exam.
- Forbid students to sit in desks that are in hard-to-patrol areas of the room.

Writing notes on beverage bottle labels. (Student removes the label from a clear plastic water bottle, prints notes on the inner or outer label, and reattaches it to the bottle.)

- Allow only pencil and paper on the desktops during the exam.

Pre-written notes onto the desktop.

- Patrol the desk rows during the exam.
- Inspect the desktops before and after the exam.

Writing notes on arms or articles of clothing (hats, jacket sleeves, shoes, etc.).

- Have students place hats and all other non-essential clothing under the desk during the exam.
- Patrol the room during the exam, being observant of changes in arm and clothing position as you approach.

Notes programmed into calculators/cell phones/Palm Pilots.

- Allow no electronic items on the desktop during the exam.
- If the exam requires a calculator, the science and math departments have a supply of non-programmable calculators that can be issued to instructors.

Referring to notes during a restroom break from the exam.

- Ask students to use the restroom before the exam begins.
- If you are highly suspicious that a student used this method, have that student sit in a seat where you can easily observe him or her on future exams. Instruct the student to complete one page of the exam at a time and not to look ahead at any other pages. This will prevent the student from knowing all the exam's questions before leaving for the restroom.

Obtaining old copies of exams from previous semesters.

- Have several exams and alternate their use from semester to semester.
- Do not allow students to keep the exams. Allow some time for students to review their graded exams in class but require the students to return the exam to you before leaving the room.

Obtaining copies of exams from school computers.

- Do not store exams on computers that are accessible to students, even if your files are password protected. Instead, keep the exam files on removable computer discs and back them up only onto other removable computer discs.

Signaling on multiple-choice exams. (Students use subtle gestures, body position, pen position, or foot-tapping to communicate answers during a multiple-choice exam).

- Be alert to unnatural or excessive movement.
- Seat students randomly on the day of the exam.

Submitting plagiarized term papers.

- The Campus Professional Development Center offers classes for instructors on the use of TurnItIn.com, a computer service that detects plagiarism in student essays.

Your response to cheating and plagiarism

It is best to have your responses to cheating and plagiarism planned out ahead of time and clearly stated in your syllabus. A list of some possible responses is given below.

- Student must take a permanent zero score for the assignment.
- Student loses points for cheating.
- Student must complete an alternative assignment.
- Student must write an essay about academic honesty.
- Student must take all future exams under direct supervision.

Your response may, of course, include more than one of these actions or may include actions not on this list. You can create some latitude in your response by using the word “may” in your policy. For example, “Academic dishonesty (cheating) will not be tolerated. Students found cheating will receive a zero for the assignment and *may* be given an additional assignment as well.” Leaving some latitude allows you to account for the severity of the cheating or how certain you are that cheating occurred. Note: Instructors do not have the authority to drop a student from the course for cheating. However, if a pattern of cheating behavior has been documented, the dean of student services may elect to do so.

Instructors should also report the incident to their division dean. The dean (in conjunction with the dean of student services) may assign additional penalties, especially if the student has a history of academic dishonesty. Penalties that the deans may assign are listed below:

- Student must report to the dean of academic services
- Student must visit counselors and discuss the cheating incident
- Student must enroll in an ethics course
- Student is temporarily suspended from class
- Student is dropped from the course



Student rights and due process

Note that students have the right to contest both the accusation of cheating and the nature of the instructor's response. The procedure that the college must follow when determining if a student broke a rule of conduct (and, if so, what the appropriate response should be) is known as due process. A brief summary of the due process procedure is given below. The entire due process procedure, as well as the student conduct code and the college's definition of cheating, are available on the internet at http://www.laspositas.cc.ca.us/services/conduct_code.htm.

Summary of Due Process Procedure: The first step of the due process procedure allows the student to present his or her case to the dean of student services. The dean determines if the accusation has merit and if the instructor's action is appropriate. If the student is not satisfied with the dean's decision on the case, the student has the right to appeal to a formal hearing committee. The hearing committee consists of two faculty members, two student representatives, and a committee member appointed by the vice president of student services. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the formal hearing committee, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the college president. The college president's decision is final.

Resource Personnel for Academic Honesty Issues

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