



A GUIDE TO

ACADEMIC  INTEGRITY

FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Introduction

The University of Alberta places a very high value on academic integrity. Our Code of Student Behaviour (COSB) outlines what students are prohibited from doing and provides the rationale for those rules, noting that the value of our degree depends upon the integrity of the teaching and learning process, including the “honesty and soundness of the evaluation process.” (COSB §30.1). Without stringent standards for academic integrity, the evaluation process becomes flawed and, ultimately, unreliable, diminishing the value of the degree for everyone.

As straightforward as the concept of academic integrity might seem, it may carry different meanings for different people. Specific definitions may vary from institution to institution, adding to the confusion for graduate students who have attended other universities. International students may find Canadian cultural assumptions or customs associated with proper writing and citation bewildering. Students may not bother to read the COSB because they assume they already know what it says. This is a dangerous assumption that can lead to an inadvertent rule violation.

The COSB also lists possible sanctions for violations. A wide range of sanctions is available to decision makers, from a reprimand to grade reduction, suspension and expulsion. The consequences of these sanctions are particularly severe for graduate students. Even lesser sanctions can affect academic standing, scholarships and opportunities for future study.

Students are expected to engage in the highest level of honesty in their work. It is possible, however, to violate academic integrity even if you believed you *were* being honest. Each year, students who did not intend to deceive are charged under the COSB because they were careless. **Be aware, the onus is on students to understand the University of Alberta’s expectations regarding academic integrity.** Not knowing is not an excuse.

This guide is designed to help. It refers to both the Code of Student Behaviour and the UAPPOL Policy on Research and Scholarship Integrity. It is simply a guide and students are strongly encouraged to refer to the policies themselves. It is not intended to replace or supersede the policies and procedures in place.



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Code Of Student Behaviour (COSB)

The COSB applies to all current and former students. It provides explicit rules about Inappropriate Academic Behaviour (§30.3.2) which, in general, are meant to prevent students from gaining unearned academic advantage over others and to ensure that all students are evaluated fairly. While this guide refers to matters of academic integrity only, it is important to note that the COSB also includes non-academic offences, designed to uphold the rights of students and other members of the university community as they engage in their academic activities, knowing that the University protects their safety, security and dignity.

The following provides definitions from the COSB as of June 2014, as well as commentary and examples of behaviours which would violate the COSB. Always refer to the Code of Student Behaviour online for the most up to date information.

Plagiarism

§30.3.2(1) No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

Students often think of plagiarism only as buying essays online or copying passages from the Internet; however, the University of Alberta definition includes a broad range of activities which may constitute plagiarism. Note that plagiarism can occur in written work or oral presentations, posters or any other assignments or academic writing. Note also that this definition includes unintentional plagiarism. The basic assumption is that everything you submit for credit has been created entirely by you, unless you have identified it as coming from another source by using quotation marks, in-text citations, footnotes and/or a reference page or some other explicit acknowledgement; therefore, if you do not properly attribute the material you borrow from, you are incorrectly submitting the work as your own.

Some examples of plagiarism are:

- Cutting and pasting material from an online source without quotation marks and proper attribution, even if no author is clearly named on the website.
- Using another's idea as your own without attribution, including paraphrasing without a citation to the original source.
- Following the format and/or argumentation of an article without attribution.
- Copying material from another student either in an assignment or as part of an essay.
- Using data you did not collect on your own, without attribution, as the basis for your work.
- Allowing another person to correct or rewrite your work before submitting it to the point where it no longer reflects your own writing and/or intellectual abilities.
- Using a logo, graphic or cartoon you did not create without permission and attribution.



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Cheating

§30.3.2(2) a No Student shall in the course of an examination or other similar activity, obtain or attempt to obtain information from another Student or other unauthorized source, give or attempt to give information to another Student, or use, attempt to use or possess for the purposes of use any unauthorized material.

Examples include using or possessing notes (even if you did not use them, it is reasonable to assume they were created for the purpose of cheating), copying from another student, allowing another student to copy from you, programming information into electronic devices, receiving information on electronic devices (e.g., a cell phone), writing answers/formulas on any part of your body, receiving unauthorized assistance on a take-home exam, and so on.

30.3.2(2) b No Student shall represent or attempt to represent him or herself as another or have or attempt to have himself or herself represented by another in the taking of an examination, preparation of a paper or other similar activity. See also Misrepresentation of Facts in 30.3.6 (4).

Having someone complete an assignment or exam for you, or doing so for them, requires premeditation and intent – two things that will increase sanctions in a case of cheating.

30.3.2(2) c No Student shall represent another's substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as the Student's own work.

Tutors, editors and proofreaders must be used appropriately. It is important that the assignment reflect the work and abilities of the student whose name is on it. For a guideline, see the tip sheet on How Much Assistance is Too Much.
(<http://osja.ualberta.ca/Students/AppropriateCollaboration/UsingAssistance.aspx>)

30.3.2(2) d No Student shall submit in any course or program of study, without the written approval of the course Instructor, all or a substantial portion of any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project, assignment, presentation or poster for which credit has previously been obtained by the Student or which has been or is being submitted by the Student in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.

Some people refer to this as self-plagiarism. While the term is not quite accurate, the COSB forbids taking shortcuts by submitting something for which you have already received credit or by using all or a portion of your own published works in another paper without citation. Notice that it is permissible to use work formerly submitted for credit with written approval from the course instructor. An example where it might be acceptable is using a term paper you wrote for a course as a chapter in your thesis, with your supervisor's permission.



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30.3.2(2) e No Student shall submit in any course or program of study any academic writing, essay, thesis, report, project, assignment, presentation or poster containing a statement of fact known by the Student to be false or a reference to a source the Student knows to contain fabricated claims (unless acknowledged by the Student), or a fabricated reference to a source.

This overlaps to some extent with Misrepresentation of Facts (below). Some examples might be using a source known to be unreliable and attributing the material to a legitimate source, making up a reference or altering or fabricating lab results.

Misuse of Confidential Materials

§30.3.2.3 No Student shall procure, distribute, or receive any confidential academic material such as pending examinations, laboratory results or the contents thereof from any source without prior and express consent of the Instructor.

This might include receiving course materials from students in other sections/years of a course for use in your own work, or material received as a TA or RA and shared with students who will be assessed on that information.

Misrepresentation of Facts

§30.3.6(4) No Student shall misrepresent pertinent facts to any member of the University community for the purpose of obtaining academic or other advantage.

Examples include providing false documentation to gain admission to the University of Alberta, altering or falsifying records relating to your academic performance, altering answers on a graded assignment or exam and requesting re-grading, or using a fraudulent excuse to obtain an exam deferral.

Participation in an Offence

§30.3.6(5) No Student shall counsel or encourage or knowingly aid or assist, directly or indirectly, another person in the commission of any offence under this Code.

Helping someone to violate the COSB is also a violation of the COSB. You may be under pressure to “help” your friends, but understand that you put yourself at risk of charges if you help them do something you know to be wrong.

Bribery

§30.3.6(7) No student shall offer or provide a monetary or other benefit to any member of the University for the purpose of gaining academic or other advantage.

Offering money, favours, or using personal relationships to gain unearned academic advantage is another activity that requires both premeditation and intent. It is entirely unacceptable in the academic context.



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Research And Scholarship Integrity Policy

The Research and Scholarship Integrity Policy applies to anyone engaging in research and other scholarly activities at the University of Alberta. The policy provides the rationale for the need for integrity, including the claim that “Dishonesty and fabrication fundamentally undermine the worth and usefulness of research and other scholarly work.” (UAPPOL Policy on Research and S Scholarly Integrity). It goes on to outline procedures in case of a violation of the policy. For students, allegations are adjudicated through the procedures outlined in the COSB. Most importantly, the policy identifies nine fundamental principles of scholarship and research, as summarized below:

1. Collect, report and analyze data honestly and scrupulously, and communicate findings accurately.
2. Treat human and animal research participants with the utmost respect and care, including receiving approval from the appropriate Research Ethics Board (REB) for the research. See also the list of Research Conduct Policies on the VP Research website.
3. Appropriately acknowledge authorship, assistance and collaboration. Those who participated in a substantial way must be named; those who did not must not be named. See also the Guidelines for Authorship in the Graduate Program Manual.
4. All those named as author must be accountable for the contents of the publication or presentation and must approve of the final version of the work.
5. Cite others’ work, writing, ideas, methods and data appropriately. See also COSB – Plagiarism, Misrepresentation of Facts and the University of Alberta Intellectual Property Guidelines.
6. Use unpublished material only with the permission of the authors and proper attribution. See also the University of Alberta Intellectual Property Guidelines.
7. Use information received through confidential means only with permission.
8. Comply with source regulations when accessing or using confidential information/materials (e.g., private archives or medical records).
9. Avoid or minimize any possible conflicts of interest or conflicts of commitment. See also the University Conflict of Commitment and Conflict of Interest Policy.



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Tips For Avoiding Plagiarism:

1. Manage Your Time

Start early, give yourself plenty of time to work through your material and write multiple drafts of your papers. Citing sources properly and double-checking your work is time consuming; rushing through it at the last minute almost guarantees problems.

2. Take Careful Notes

Being scrupulous in your note-taking at the outset will simplify your process at the end. Be sure you note specifically if you are copying exact words, putting another's ideas into your own words or jotting down your own ideas so that when you sit down to weave it all together, you know exactly how each item has to be referenced. Cut and paste with caution when using Internet sources. Always copy the URL as well or, even better, keep a printout for future reference. Finally, make sure you cite every source you use, whether from print or electronic, radio, public speech, website or anything else you did not generate on your own. It is better to have too many citations than not enough.

3. Use Style Guides

Citations can be confusing and, at times, it can be difficult to know how to cite unusual sources. Most disciplines or journals use an agreed-upon citation style for consistency (e.g., APA for Psychology and Education or MLA for English). Find out which style you are expected to use for your papers and then purchase the style guide or use one from the University of Alberta Libraries. Style guides provide formatting guidelines for publication and information on how to cite even the most obscure kind of source. Information is also available on the University of Alberta Libraries' website.

4. Understand Paraphrasing

Many students become confused by the notion that it is possible to plagiarize another person's idea. Putting someone else's idea into your own words still requires acknowledging the original author. When you use someone's *exact words*, you must place quotation marks around the words, use an in-text citation and make an entry into your list of sources. When you put someone else's *idea* into your own words, you need an in-text citation and an entry into your list of sources, but no quotation marks. That way, the person who came up with the idea in the first place gets proper credit. See pages 12-13 for some examples.

5. Ask Questions

Any time you are unsure of what should be cited or how to do so, ask the professor or supervisor who will be evaluating your work. Only that person knows exactly what he or she expects and can give you the right answer for that specific assignment. Be aware that "common knowledge" is not nearly as common as you might think. It is better to cite something than to assume that it is common knowledge.



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Collaboration

As an institution of higher learning, the University of Alberta recognizes collaboration as an important part of intellectual and academic development. Collaboration can produce creative and innovative ideas and research; however, it can also be complicated. As outlined in the Research and Scholarship Integrity Policy, any and all collaboration must be appropriately acknowledged.

Group Projects – Group projects are one way to capitalize on the benefits of collaboration. In this context, the whole is certainly greater than the sum of its parts. It takes a certain amount of creativity for a group of individual students to learn how to work together effectively. Students working on group projects should be aware of the following:

- ◆ If your name is on the assignment, you are responsible for everything in that assignment, whether or not you participated in every section. Carefully review all the material submitted by other students in your group.
- ◆ Ask questions of the professor if your group is confused about expectations.
- ◆ It may be helpful to include a section describing the role of each student within the group, if appropriate for that project.
- ◆ Understand that everyone has different approaches to their work. Your group, whether you were assigned or chose to work together, will likely have to negotiate your process before you even begin the assignment.
- ◆ It is helpful for the group to agree upon a mechanism to deal with any conflict that arises as you work together.

Inappropriate Collaboration – There is a difference between participating in scholarly discussions or debates with your colleagues and engaging in inappropriate collaboration on assignments intended to be completed individually.

- ◆ Using another student's ideas or words without acknowledgment amounts to Plagiarism (§30.3.2(1)).
- ◆ Having someone write, rewrite, extensively edit or correct your papers for you is tantamount to Cheating (§30.3.2(2)b and §30.3.2(2)c).
- ◆ Helping someone else in those ways is Participation in an Offence (§30.3.6(5)).

One way to work appropriately with your colleagues is to discuss concepts, research and ideas together and then go your separate ways to write your individual assignments.



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Reporting

The decision to report an incident of cheating or plagiarism may not be an easy one. While the University of Alberta does not *require* students to report academic dishonesty when they see it, we do rely on the entire university community to uphold academic integrity and it is in your best interest to do so. Sometimes that means bringing infractions to the attention of a university official. Here are some things you should know about reporting violations of the Code of Student Behaviour:

- ◆ Tell the right person – If you witness cheating or are aware of plagiarism in a course, it is important to notify the professor who has the responsibility for dealing with the issue. If you know of a student falsifying lab results, the professor in charge of the lab or the lab coordinator should be informed. The Grad Chair or Grad Coordinator in your department is the best person to talk to if you are uncertain who to tell. If you witness violations of the COSB that are not related to academic work like theft, vandalism or violence, call Protective Services at 492-5050.
- ◆ Keep the information private – Unless an allegation has been properly investigated, it is nothing but speculation. Do not discuss the issue with your colleagues or office-mates. Gossip can be very damaging to a student's reputation and creates a hostile atmosphere for everyone. If you need to vent your frustration or discuss the situation with someone, the Graduate Student Ombudsperson (492-4689) can assist you in understanding the process and your role in it.
- ◆ Confidentiality – The University of Alberta is bound by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) Act. The requirement to protect students' privacy is taken seriously, both when they report incidents of academic dishonesty and when they are accused of violating the COSB. We are obligated to disclose the information a student needs in order to respond to charges, but no more than is necessary.
- ◆ Anonymous reports – There is a constant tension in COSB cases between protecting confidentiality and ensuring full disclosure of the allegations against an accused student. Because accused students have the right to know the case against them (including the identity of the person making the allegations) we cannot accept anonymous reports, no matter how detailed or plausible they might be. Occasionally, it is possible to find corroborating evidence but, in general, anonymous reports do not lead to COSB charges.
- ◆ Outcome of investigations – Under the FOIPP Act, students who report incidents of academic dishonesty are not entitled to know the outcome. Although this may be frustrating, you can rest assured that the University takes the information seriously and follows up on complaints. If there is insufficient evidence to charge someone under the COSB, we will take steps to prevent that kind of activity from happening again. No matter what the result of the case is, you affect positive change and contribute to an overall environment of academic integrity when you report academic dishonesty.



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Resources

The Academic Integrity program

University of Alberta Libraries

University of Alberta Student Success Centre

University of Alberta Vice-Provost Research Policies and Services

University of Alberta Research Ethics Boards (REB)

University of Alberta Intellectual Property Guidelines for Graduate Students and Supervisors

Graduate Program Manual

Academic Integrity Handbook for Instructors and Teaching Assistants

Office of Student Judicial Affairs

Graduate Student Ombudsperson

Graduate Students' Association



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Appropriate Paraphrasing Example 1

Original text:

“The multiplicity of strategies in cigarette ads show that the advertising agencies of contemporary capitalism are not at all sure as to what will attract consumers to their products, or with what images consumers identify. For, as I have been arguing, one of the features of contemporary culture is precisely the fragmentation, transitoriness and multiplicity of images, which refuse to crystallize into a stable image culture.” (p. 255)

Source ¹:

Kellner, D. (1995). *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge.

Unacceptable (author not acknowledged, no quotation marks around direct quotes)

Multiple strategies in cigarette ads demonstrate that the contemporary advertising agencies do not know what images will attract consumers. Fragmentation, transitoriness and multiplicity of images are the features of contemporary culture that do not allow an image culture to stabilize.

Unacceptable (nearly verbatim quote with no quotation marks or page number)

The multiplicity of strategies in cigarette ads show that the advertising agencies of contemporary capitalism are not at all sure as to what will attract consumers to their products, or with what images consumers identify. For one of the features of contemporary culture are precisely the fragmentation, transitoriness and multiplicity of images, which refuse to crystallize into a stable image culture (Kellner, 1995).

Unacceptable (gives only partial credit)

Contemporary advertising agencies illustrate their uncertainty about what kinds of images consumers identify by using multiple approaches and strategies for advertising cigarettes. Kellner (1995) argues that contemporary culture, with its diversity of images, fragmentation and transitory nature, will never allow a stable image culture to emerge.

Acceptable

Kellner (1995) argues that cigarette ads, with their ever-changing strategies and images, demonstrate that advertising agencies do not know which images will resonate with consumers. He believes contemporary culture does not allow a stable image culture to form precisely because of its fragmented and transitory nature.

¹ These are to be used as examples only. Please refer to appropriate style guides for the citation style you require.



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Appropriate Paraphrasing Example 2

Original Text:

“Research has long pointed to the dramatic power of peer influence in adolescence and young adulthood, but what has not been adequately considered in previous research and prevention strategy is whether this peer influence comes simply from what other peers actually believe is the right thing to do and how they behave, or from what young people think their peers believe is right and how they think most others behave.” (p. 8)

Source ²:

Perkins, H.W., Ed. (2003). *The Social norms approach to preventing school and college age substance abuse*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Unacceptable (good paraphrase but no citation)

Research shows that young people are susceptible to peer pressure but it is unclear whether or not they actually know what their peers are thinking.

Unacceptable (gives only partial credit)

While we know that youth are dramatically influenced by their peers, research has not adequately considered where that influence comes from. Perkins (2003) points out that young people might know what their peers believe in terms of the right way to behave, but it is also possible that they are simply making an educated guess.

Unacceptable (nearly verbatim quote without quotation marks or page number)

Research has long pointed to the dramatic power of peer influence in adolescence, but what has not been adequately considered in previous research and prevention strategy is where that influence comes from (Perkins, 2003).

Unacceptable (misrepresents the author’s intent)

Research, according to Perkins (2003), has been woefully negligent in answering questions about peer pressure and its effects on young people. He claims that flawed methodologies have resulted in important questions about what adolescents know not being answered.

Acceptable

Perkins (2003) claims that, while research has shown that young people are heavily influenced by their peers, no one has looked into whether they know what their peers actually believe or whether they are behaving in ways they *think* would gain their peers’ approval.

Acceptable

According to Perkins (2003), current research into the effect of peer pressure on adolescent behaviour does not address the question of whether young people actually know what their peers think.

² These are to be used as examples only. Please refer to appropriate style guides for the citation style you require.