

## Academic misconduct

*What is academic misconduct?*

Academic misconduct refers to acts of gaining (or attempting to gain) an unfair academic advantage or helping (or attempting to help) another person do the same. Here are some examples:

- Submitting false or incomplete records (example: submitting false transcripts with an application)
- Cheating, which can include using unauthorized materials/tools, getting help from others when you shouldn't, or falsifying research data (examples: copying answers to an assignment from a 'study help' website; paying someone to write an essay for you; or, faking lab data instead of completing the experiment)
- Bringing unauthorized materials or devices into an exam (example: using a smart phone to access answers online during an exam)
- Not following exam rules or policies (examples: disregarding the rules listed in the [Student Conduct during Examinations](#) policy)
- Plagiarism, which is using someone else's work as your own without giving them credit (examples: failing to cite sources used in an essay; submitting written work with patchwriting)
- Self-plagiarism (example: reusing parts or all of a previously submitted essay from a different course)
- Impersonation during an exam or assessment (example: pretending to be someone else during an exam or having someone pretend to be you)
- Not following disciplinary measures or an integrity plan (example: failing to follow the terms set out after a previous misconduct incident)

**This list is not a substitute for the Academic Calendar policies outlined in 3. Academic Misconduct by UBC Students, so please ensure you have read and understand the content of the governing policy.**

*How do I avoid academic misconduct?*

**Refrain from uploading materials, questions, or answers to 'study' or 'homework help' websites.**

Sharing materials from your course on study websites, whether it is before, during, or after an exam (or even after you've completed the course) is not only an academic integrity concern, but it can also be an issue of intellectual property rights and copyright law. Most course materials, such as syllabi, assignment instructions, and tests, belong to their authors—your instructors. Sharing these items without the owner's permission is not just a form of cheating, it is intellectual theft and can be copyright infringement. All members of UBC have a moral and legal obligation to respect intellectual property rights (check out [copyright.ubc.ca](http://copyright.ubc.ca)).



**Avoid 'study' or 'homework help' websites to access solutions or answers.**

Viewing questions/answers on these websites during an exam constitutes cheating, whether you are taking an exam in the Gym, in class, or behind your computer at home. But what about before an exam? Studying exam answers available on free or paid 'homework help' websites may seem okay—you're still studying, right? What's wrong with that? Well, you may be accessing materials procured through intellectual theft or copyright violation. You also risk plagiarism if your answers align too closely with publisher solutions or with classmates' who studying the same answers.

Taking your own notes, putting things into your own words, reviewing only materials provided by the instructor, and studying from those is the best way for you to defend against misconduct. Studying the ethical way may not seem as "easy" as these "study" sites claim to be, but it is a whole lot easier than facing misconduct allegations and disciplinary measures.

**Read your syllabus and test/exam instructions closely.**

Did you clarify any confusions with your instructor? Speak with your instructor ahead of time if you are unsure about expectations for an assignment, test, or exam. You should know whether there are requirements or rules regarding in-text citations and references, whether a test is open/closed book, if 'cheat' sheets are allowed, what resources can be used, etc.

**Avoid study groups that participate in unethical behavior.**

Studying with classmates can be productive and is a great way to make friends while keeping up with your academics. However, you may encounter study groups that demonstrate unethical behavior, such as obtaining exam answers, collaboratively writing exams, or copying assignments. Use your intuition—if it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. The short-term benefits of these behaviors may be tempting, but you lose out on something pretty important—learning. You also put yourself—specifically, your academic and career ambitions—at serious risk. Sure, you spend less time studying when you get exam answers from your friend who took the course in Term 1, but unethical study behaviors may also get you a grade of zero, a notation of academic discipline on your academic record, or worse.

Signs that study groups are acting *ethically* include: reviewing only material provided in that course by that instructor; completing all work individually and in each member's own words; avoiding "homework help" websites and instead asking the instructor/ TA for help; welcoming to others and comfortable openly sharing studying strategies. If you would not want to tell your instructor how you studied for their exam or completed the assignment, then you may be practicing study behaviors considered to be academic misconduct.

**Understand the bounds of completing assignments on your own vs. with others.**

In most cases, assignments are expected to be examples of your individual knowledge and work. If an assignment is submitted under your name only, then the work is assumed to be produced by you alone. If an assignment or test is expected to be completed in a partnership or as a group, these expectations will be outlined clearly in the assignment instructions and you should work within these



boundaries. If you aren't sure what level of collaboration is allowed, speak with your instructor or TA before completing the work. Not knowing that collaboration was prohibited is not an excuse for committing collusion.

Lab partner situations can be the trickiest: although you may be allowed to complete a lab experiment in a partnership, the work you two produce should be in your own individual words. Completing one lab report and submitting copies separately (even if you slightly reword each of your submission) is in most cases inappropriate and could put you at risk of collusion.

### **Don't make assumptions.**

Just because something is permitted in one class or for a particular assignment does not mean that it will be appropriate for another class or assignment. Making assumptions can lead you to trouble. Treat each course an assignment as a unique situation and read the instructions carefully. If something isn't mentioned in the instructions, don't just assume it is allowed. Instead, ask your instructor for guidance before completing the assignment.

### **Support others, but not to your own detriment.**

Help can be harmful when expectations for academic honesty are not being minded. While supporting a friend or classmate is great, ensure you aren't putting yourself at risk. Sharing assignments with others can be a tricky situation. The important thing to remember is that you can't control the actions of others. So, before you share your essay draft with a classmate, consider that you might have different ideas of what constitutes copying. If a classmate heavily copies your essay in their own draft, you could both be accused of collusion or you might be thought to be the one who plagiarized.

Sharing work after it has been graded can be okay, such as discussing your finished papers with classmates so everyone can see how they interpreted the topic. However, sharing your work from a previous class with a friend who is currently taking it may cause issues if the friend copies the work to submit as their own.

### **Develop your study and time management skills.**

By developing your skills for studying and managing your time, you'll feel prepared to handle your workload and avoid pressure to engage in dishonesty. For some, these skills come easily; for others, it can be very difficult. The first step is knowing yourself, what you know, what you need to know, and what you might need help to learn. The next step is finding out what methods and tools work best for you! There is a free service available to you for developing effective study and time management skills. Our campus's [Learning Strategist](#) is a professional who can meet with you and provide you with personalized learning support, and this service is totally free! There are also many [self-guided resources](#) to explore so you can try different things and figure out what works best for you.

### **Be honest with yourself.**

Knowing your limits is important to keeping a level head as an academic. However, it can take some trial and error to figure out what your limits are. Be honest with yourself about what is and isn't working for you. Be honest with yourself and your support system about how many courses you can



manage while keeping a healthy school-life balance. Be honest with your expectations for yourself in terms of grades and averages and be ready to adjust expectations and learn from your mistakes. There is no shame in expecting less of yourself—in fact, it makes it easier to exceed expectations! Many academics will tell you about the lowest grade they ever received and how it had zero impact on their life despite the stress it caused them at the time. Nobody will ever tell you that they wish they had cheated instead.

### **Start early.**

Read the assignment instructions as soon as you get them. Even if you won't start it for a while, it is important to introduce yourself to the tasks and expectations as early as possible. By knowing what you need to accomplish early, you can make a plan. Starting early means you can accomplish big projects in small, easy-to-do pieces, making the assignment seem much less overwhelming. Starting early also ensures you have time to understand the assignment, ask questions, get clarification, access learning support, and check that you've met all expectations before submitting. When you only give yourself a short amount of time to think about the task and then complete it, you'll feel stressed, rushed, and overwhelmed, and you may even be tempted to use dishonest methods to save time.

### **Ask as many questions as you need.**

Don't assume that you are the only one with questions—you can almost guarantee that for every question you have, there are several other students with the same question. Read everything with the intention of fully understanding it, including instructions for assignments and exams. If you aren't clear on something, ask your teaching assistant (TA) or your instructor for clarification. Some people may benefit from discussing these questions with their instructor in person, while others may find written communication more helpful, so try and choose the method that works for you.

If the answer is still confusing, ask again, stating which specific parts you are confused about. You can also seek second opinions, such as from a librarian, tutor, or writing consultant, but always defer to your instructor as they are the one marking your assignment.

### **Don't believe that "everyone cheats."**

No, not everyone cheats. Some do. Most don't. However, we can make this clear: you will not be in competition with elite cheaters cheating to the top of their class, and thus, you should never feel pressured to cheat because you believe others are doing it. Even if a classmate tells you "everyone is doing this," have the courage to stay honest. Nobody "gets away" with cheating. It is important to realize that dishonest actions committed long ago can have profound implications in the future.

### **Take care of yourself first.**

Your mental and physical wellbeing is vital and should not be pushed aside for academic reasons. Nothing is more important than your wellbeing and happiness—not grades, not exams, not family expectations, not money, not time, not success. Dishonesty can happen when personal difficulties become overwhelming, leaving little space in your head to think. It can also happen when one feels apathetic or disinterested towards school work. Getting support and developing strategies to manage



stress before it affects one's academics is an empowered choice to make. If you ever feel pressured to cheat due to stress, personal, or mental health issues, the only thing you need to do is [speak with a counselor](#) about how you are feeling. Help yourself first, then you can get support with a plan to address your academics.

---

Website links:

- [calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,41,89,1009#11115](https://calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,41,89,1009#11115)
- [calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,1547](https://calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,1547)
- [copyright.ubc.ca](https://copyright.ubc.ca)
- [students.ok.ubc.ca/academic-success/learning-hub/learning-strategist](https://students.ok.ubc.ca/academic-success/learning-hub/learning-strategist)
- [students.ok.ubc.ca/academic-success/learning-hub/self-guided-resources/#study](https://students.ok.ubc.ca/academic-success/learning-hub/self-guided-resources/#study)
- [students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness/counselling-mental-health](https://students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness/counselling-mental-health)

