

Academic Integrity in Computer Science and Information Systems Classes

Adopted by the Faculty teaching courses in Computer Science and Information Systems, August 2016. This document presents the position of faculty teaching courses in the areas of computer science and/or information systems, Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO, on the subject of Academic Integrity. This document is consistent with the University's overall code of academic integrity, and is presented in the form of a series of questions and answers. We are indebted to the Department of Computer Science at [The George Washington University](#) for publishing an [excellent example](#) for this document to follow; we have adapted (with permission) that department's very well written list of actions that are academically honest and others that are academically dishonest.

Q: What is academic integrity?

- A. You are acting with academic integrity to the extent that you do your academic work honestly and ethically. In particular, you are acting with academic integrity if you are
- taking full credit for your own work, and giving full credit to others who have helped you, or whose work you have incorporated into your own
 - representing your own work honestly and accurately
 - cooperating with other students, on academic exercises, only where specifically authorized

Q. Why should I act with academic integrity?

- A. Here are some reasons why:
- *Pride in yourself:* You should be able to look at yourself in the mirror and see an honest, ethical person looking back.
 - *Pride in your work:* You should be able to tell yourself that you completed your work using your own knowledge and skills, without deceiving your colleagues, your instructors, or yourself.
 - *Pride in your profession:* You should make yourself ready to move on to subsequent courses, graduate, or employment fully prepared. If you have "cheated" in your work, taking credit for others' efforts, you have cheated yourself. The main reason you are in a university program is to learn to be a professional in the field. If you cheat, probably you have not learned what you were supposed to learn.

Q. I am an honest student. Why should I care if other students are acting honestly?

- A. Here are some reasons why:
- *The value of your degree is reduced:* If you graduate from a program with a reputation for tolerating unethical or dishonest behavior, what will employers or graduate schools think of you? They will have no way to know that you were one of the honest ones.
 - *The world may be a more unpleasant place:* In every aspect of modern life we are dependent on computers and the software that operates them. Indeed, we trust our lives, and our businesses, to computers and software. Nearly all Computer Science/Information Systems graduates will, at some point in their careers, be responsible for some important aspect of a computer system whose failure might hurt someone's business or body. Graduates who received their education on the strength of others' work, not their own, may well be incompetent and dangerous in the workplace. Would you drive a car whose computerized braking system was developed by former students you knew had cheated their way through school? Would you trust your credit card numbers to the e-commerce site developed by former students who cheated their way through school?

Q. Generally, how do we define academic dishonesty?

- A. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating or lying of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. Intentionally or knowingly

helping someone else to commit an act of academic dishonesty is also considered academic dishonesty.

Q. How do I know what's academically honest, and what's not, in computer science and information systems classes?

A: This document provides you with a description of policies regarding academic dishonesty in computer science and information systems classes. If your instructor has different policies, s/he is obligated to inform you of those differences in writing. Usually, instructors will describe variations from this policy as part of the syllabus for the course, or as part of the instructions for an assignment, exam, paper, or other required work.

Q. What constitutes cheating on an assignment, lab, project, or paper in computer science and information systems classes?

A. The following constitutes cheating on an assignment, lab, or project in computer science and information systems classes:

- Failure to give credit for help received. *All* help received must be credited, whether the help is from the instructor, a class assistant, or another student or friend.
- Failure to credit sources. If your instructor has explicitly, and in writing, given permission for some code or work to be copied, then any code or work copied must be fully credited.
- Failure to work individually. Unless otherwise specified by the instructor, assignments/labs/projects are to be done individually. This means that you may talk to classmates and other students about an assignment/lab/project, but you must do all the work yourself from beginning to end. Two or more students may sit down together and discuss an assignment/lab/project as they are working on it, but each student must do his/her own work in completing the assignment. Note that if you talk to other students about the assignment or work with someone on the assignment, that activity should be included in the "credit" section described in the previous bullet.
- Submitting the same work in more than one course without prior permission of both instructors.
- Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any data, information, or citation in an academic exercise.
- Failure to keep your workspace private so that others are able to access your files. Sharing your passwords and logins with others can create academic situations under which all parties are liable. Use only your computer, your logins, and your NW Online account.
- You may never copy or share computer files with any one, unless your instructor has provided written instructions that explicitly spell out when sharing or copying is allowed. All parties involved will be liable for academic dishonesty if files are shared or copied.
- Copying or sharing code or work that is yours or from another source, unless explicitly (in writing) allowed by your instructor. You may never copy or share code or work that is yours or from another source, unless your instructor has provided written instructions that explicitly spell out when copying is permissible. "Another source" includes, but is not limited to your classmates, other students on campus, students on other campuses, books, and electronic sources. "Work" includes anything that the person will be handing in to the instructor for a grade. For example,
 - you cannot copy all or part of someone else's program code
 - you cannot copy all or part of someone else's written documentation
 - you cannot copy objects or components that someone else has created (for example, in a database, you cannot copy someone else's tables, queries, forms, reports, modules, macros, or any other component of the database that was created by another individual)
 - you cannot share your code with someone else at any time, under any circumstances

Q. How do I properly credit help received on an assignment, lab, project or paper?

- A. If your instructor has explicitly, and in writing, given permission for you to get help from classmates and other individuals, you must still properly credit any such help.
- For written documents, credit can be given at the beginning of the document, on an insert that follows the cover page and precedes the document text.
 - For assignments that are dropped in the dropbox and that do not allow easy internal documentation, you can use the Comments feature in the dropbox to give credit to other sources.
 - For programming projects, credit can be given in the comments section at the beginning of the program file. Credit should include the name of the person, the role (instructor, class assistant, lab assistant, classmate, friend, etc.), and a brief one-sentence description of the help received. Examples:

Joe Smith, classmate. We worked on this program together from beginning to end. We discussed program design and helped each other with debugging problems.

Mary Brown, instructor: She helped me with the design for method myMethod.

Alex Sampson: Alex helped me with the try..catch statements.

Q. How do I properly credit sources, including books and information from the Internet, that I use in an assignment, lab, project or paper?

- A. If your instructor has explicitly, and in writing, given permission for some code or work to be copied, than any code or work copied must be fully credited. Examples of work that your instructor might allow to be copied include quotes from books or code found on the Internet. Text copied from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, personal communications (letters and interviews for example), web pages, or other printed or electronic sources must be fully documented using [APA style](#) (or as specified by the instructor)

For papers, sources are normally placed at the end of the paper. In the body of the paper, citations refer the reader to the appropriate source. Citations should follow [APA style](#) (or as specified by the instructor)

For assignments that are dropped in the dropbox and that do not allow easy internal documentation, you can use the Comments feature in the dropbox to give credit to other sources.

For programming projects, credit can be given in the comments section at the beginning of the program file.

Q. If I use information from printed or electronic sources, but do not copy word for word, do I still have to credit the source?

- A. Yes. Work that is copied word for word should be written with quotation marks enclosing the text. (This does not apply to code that is copied). However, it is just as important to credit text or code that you have paraphrased or modified as it is to credit direct quotes. You must give credit even if you have completely re-written the text or code, but the basic idea or algorithm was gathered from another source. Failure to do so is considered plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious infraction and is subject to the penalties described in this document for academic dishonesty.

Q. What is plagiarism exactly?

- A. Plagiarism of textual material is intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information. Plagiarism of code is intentionally representing the code or an algorithm of another as one's own.

Q. What about exams? What constitutes cheating on an exam?

- A. Cheating on an exam includes, but is not limited to:
- taking answers from another student's exam or paper or allowing another student to take answers from your exam or paper
 - the use of notes or other materials not allowed or approved by the instructor
 - collaboration on a take-home or online exam unless the collaboration is approved by the instructor
 - allowing another student to take a take-home or on-line exam for you and representing the work on the exam as your own
 - copying materials from a computer file during an exam when the instructor has not designated the use of computer files
 - talking to other students during a test
 - Keeping your files/documents unsecured
 - Altering or destroying file or any evidence

Q. Can you give me a summary list of charges that would lead to a charge of academic dishonesty?

- A. Here is a summary of activities that would lead to a charge of academic dishonesty. However, be sure you read the rest of this document to fully understand these items. Unless specifically authorized by your instructor, you are acting dishonestly if you
- turn in the work of any other person(s) (former students, friends, textbook authors, people on the Internet, magazines, journals, etc.) and represent it as your own work
 - knowingly permit another person to turn in your work as his or her own work
 - copy material (code, documentation, etc.) from the work of another person
 - deliberately transform borrowed sections of code or other material in order to disguise their origin
 - fabricate compilation or execution results, representing a program that did not compile properly as one that did, or one that did not execute properly as one that did
 - collaborate with other persons on a project and fail to properly credit the help received
 - submit the same work in more than one course without prior permission of both instructors
 - steal or obtain examinations, answer keys, or program samples from the instructors' files or computer directories
 - use unauthorized materials during an open-book or closed-book examination, or communicate during an examination in an unauthorized way with another person
 - violate any rules governing administration of examinations
 - violate any rules relating to academic conduct of a course or program
 - lie to an instructor

Q. What happens to me if I am suspected of an act of academic dishonesty?

- A. This school follows the procedures provided in detail in the current university catalog Policies and Procedures of the Academic Dishonesty section. Read this information very carefully! It is the policy of this school to file a report with the Provost or graduate school for every incident of academic dishonesty.

Distribution of this document:

Copies of this document will be available in the school office and will also be posted on the school's web site. For all computer science and information systems courses, a copy of this policy, together with a written statement of the instructor's specific rules on cooperation and use of published programs, will be distributed to all students in the course within the first two weeks of the semester.