

Academic Honesty and Questions of Plagiarism

Central to Kenyon's academic program is the integrity of student work. Submitting someone else's work as though it were your own, submitting the same work for two separate courses without prior permission of the instructors, cheating of any nature in the discharge of your academic responsibilities—these are extremely serious offenses, and the most serious of all is the misrepresentation of a fellow student's work as your own.

At the beginning of each semester, a summary of the activities of the Academic Infractions Board during the prior semester, including the number and types of cases considered and the sanctions imposed, will be published in the campus newspaper. The board may also publish general statements about campus academic honesty at any other time, at its discretion, but will not describe individual cases in such reports. No information that would identify specific individuals will be included in any published report.

The following are among the array of penalties which the College may impose in response to violations of academic honesty: a directed grade of "zero" for the project itself, a directed grade of F for the entire course of study, suspension from the College, or permanent dismissal.

DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM

Learning from other scholars, artists, or fellow students is an essential element in the process of education. However, this process is undermined and becomes plagiarism whenever the words, projects, performances, reports, or ideas of another person or source are presented as if they were the original contributions of the student presenting them. Such work is also plagiarism whether or not the misrepresentation was an intentional attempt to deceive.

Such misrepresentation is always plagiarism no matter what kind of work is involved. Plagiarism may occur in oral or graphic work as well as in written work; it may occur in artistic work as well as in analytic work. Plagiarism can involve tests, examinations, laboratory reports, research results, papers, creative projects, and Senior Exercises; nor is this an exhaustive list. Because of the seriousness of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and because proper methods of indicating indebtedness may vary from one discipline to another, you must consult your instructors if you have any questions about the proper attribution of sources in particular courses of study.

That it is dishonest to give or receive illicit aid on a test or an examination is obvious. The submission of a purchased or borrowed paper as your own work is also obviously a flagrant example of plagiarism. (Bibliographical research services, other than those offered by libraries

or university research centers, should not be used without the instructor's approval.)

More generally: When you put your name on a work of any kind—a paper, a work of art, a laboratory report, a computer program, etc.—and submit it in a course of study, you thereby certify that the content is your own except where you have made specific and appropriate acknowledgment that some parts of the work have been borrowed from other sources. Again, learning from another artist, scholar, or fellow student is commendable, but to use the ideas or the phraseology of another person without such acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism.

Please note further: work in which your indebtedness to other sources is only partially or only insufficiently acknowledged is no different from work in which there is no such acknowledgment at all. They both equally constitute plagiarism. ("Partial or insufficient acknowledgment" does not refer to a failure to follow with meticulous precision the formalized details by which sources are identified—details such as those set forth in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*—but to a failure to use such basic things as quotation marks to indicate the true extent of your indebtedness to other sources.) It is crucially important to provide accurate and complete footnoting of all sources, and to use quotation marks accurately and completely in order to indicate all passages which are not of your own creation.

Further, it is fully as important to give appropriate acknowledgment of any indebtedness to fellow students, as it is to give appropriate acknowledgment of any indebtedness to scholarly or professional sources. And take especial note: faculty may assign students to work together collaboratively on projects. In such cases, make certain that you understand what the faculty member assumes will be the limits of such collaboration—e.g., is the final report or paper to be written collaboratively, or separately?—and that you understand how each student’s specific contribution to the collaborative enterprise is to be acknowledged.

To reiterate: Whenever you have submitted, under your own name, work of any kind in which it can be proven that some portion of that work is not of your own creation or formulation, yet in which there is no formal acknowledgment of that fact, you have committed plagiarism. And you have committed plagiarism whether or not there was an intentional attempt to deceive.

Submitting the same work for more than one course also constitutes plagiarism, although of a special kind. Kenyon faculty members assign papers, research topics, and other work in order to facilitate students’ academic development, and they expect to receive original work in return. Submitting the same work in whole or in part for two separate courses without prior consent of both instructors circumvents this aspect of your education. And such conduct is manifestly unfair to other students, who will receive an equal amount of credit for doing substantially more work. In a particular case in which you nevertheless feel it is justified to use all or part of a work for one class in another, you must first obtain permission from the instructors of both classes.

PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING ALLEGED ACADEMIC INFRACTIONS

The College considers an academic infraction a very serious matter. Procedures and standards exist for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating alleged instances of academic infraction. These procedures and standards are maintained by the Academic Infractions Board (AIB), which consists of students and faculty members. The AIB is a subcommittee of the faculty Committee on Academic Standards.

Academic Infractions Board. The AIB consists of three faculty members (serving two-year terms) and two student members. The faculty members of the AIB, including the chair, are elected by the faculty during the elections for faculty committees in the spring. The student members are appointed, from among the members of its Academic Affairs Committee, by the second meeting of Student Council in the fall semester.

If an accusation is accepted for hearing by the AIB during a period in the academic calendar when the full board cannot be constituted, the accused student may choose

(1) to have the case heard and decided by the available faculty members of the board, or (2) to have the case heard and decided by the full board when that body can be fully convened. If the accused student chooses this latter procedure, for the interim his or her transcript will show an “NG” for the course for which an academic infractions case is pending.

In exceedingly rare instances when a case could not ever be heard by the full board—when, for example, the student is on the verge of graduating—the associate provost in charge of supervising the work of the AIB, in consultation with available members thereof, may hear cases.

The student must decide whether or not to contest the accusation. If the student chooses not to contest the accusation, then the AIB will assume that the academic infraction was intentional and assess a penalty accordingly. In such cases, the AIB bases its judgment on only the material from which the charges arise and the collegiate records of the accused student. If the student wishes to present any other information to the AIB, then the student must contest the charges and go through the full hearing as outlined below. To contest the charges, then, is not necessarily to “plead innocent,” but only to exercise the right to present information that may be relevant to either the question of guilt or the question of appropriate punishment.

At the outset of all courses of study under their instruction, Kenyon faculty and staff should always clearly specify the forms that academic infractions may take in the particular kinds of work required in their courses, and should always respond to student inquiries about these matters. Instructors are responsible for detecting instances of academic infractions, and for dealing with suspected instances according to the procedures adopted by the faculty and described below. These procedures are designed to make the responsibility of judging and penalizing those who commit academic infractions a collegiate matter.

Alleged instances of academic infraction can be reported by any member of the campus community. A student who suspects an academic infraction presents the evidence to the instructor, who will then act on the information as described below.

A staff member or an instructor who suspects a student of an academic infraction presents the evidence to the chair of the department or program. (If the instructor is the department chair, he or she shall select another member of the department—preferably a former chair—to act as chair for the purpose of these procedures.) If the chair concurs that suspicion of an academic infraction is warranted, he or she reports the alleged violation to the chair of the AIB.

The accused student will be informed in writing of the alleged infraction and of the place and time of the hearing. Members of the AIB will meet with the student, the department chair, the instructor, and the student’s faculty advisor or another faculty member of the student’s choice. The

department chair and the instructor will answer questions asked by members of the AIB; they are not to conduct an examination of the student. The role of the advisor is to ask clarifying questions and to advise the student, not to present a defense. It is the student's obligation to present his or her own response.

At the first stage of the hearing, the board, using only the evidence of the student's work and such immediately appropriate evidence as the alleged improperly acknowledged source, will decide whether or not an academic infraction exists, regardless of the question of intent.

If the board finds the evidence unconvincing, the case is dismissed and both the student and the department or program involved will be informed of the outcome in writing. Records of the procedure along with a report of the conclusions reached will be sent to the associate provost charged with overseeing the work of the AIB.

If the board finds the evidence convincing, the case will continue on to a second phase of the hearing. The purpose of this hearing will be to determine the student's degree of culpability and to assess penalties, if necessary, for the infraction.

At this point, the issue of intent will be on the table. The AIB will be empowered to ask for any other evidence or testimony it deems relevant to its decision, including the collegiate records of the accused student.

Once all of the evidence is presented to the AIB, the board will deliberate in private and decide (1) whether the student is guilty of an academic infraction; and (2) the degree of culpability in the case—which can range from none to severe culpability—and recommend penalties, if any, to the associate provost charged with overseeing the work of the AIB. (In the event the associate provost charged with overseeing the work of the AIB is involved in the case itself, the other associate provost will assume responsibility in his or her stead.)

That associate provost will then review the case to assure that appropriate procedure and precedent were followed in the case. If the associate provost determines that they were followed, he or she will inform the student in writing of the results of the hearing. If not, the associate provost will consult with the board about his or her objections to the recommendation, and will seek to reach a new consensus prior to issuing the decision letter.

It is the responsibility of that associate provost to see that the final decision of the AIB is carried out. A student who believes that the verdict or the penalty is unfair has the right to appeal to the provost within three days of receipt of the letter from the associate provost. The scope of the appeal ordinarily shall be limited to whether the decision of the board is supported by manifest weight of the evidence contained in the record of the charges and subsequent hearing. The student carries the burden of establishing, whether by information previously made known to the board at the hearing or through newly discovered evidence, that the decision is patently unfair or unjust. The provost may decline to hear an appeal that fails to state specific grounds for review of the board's decision.

In addition to written notice to the student concerning results of any hearing, copies of that notice will be sent to the participants in the hearing, the student's academic advisor, the instructor(s) of the pertinent course, the pertinent department or program chair(s), the administrative assistant to the associate provosts, the dean of students, and the dean for academic advising and support for inclusion in the student's file, and to the registrar's office.

Materials collected for an academic hearing will be delivered to the associate provost's office, where they will remain until all students charged have graduated or withdrawn from the College.

For each hearing of the AIB, the associate provost will prepare a sealed letter containing the student's academic transcript and stating the student's previous violations of academic honesty, if any, and whether the student is on conditional enrollment. The AIB may consider this information in assessing penalties. A student against whom charges have been brought for an academic infraction may not, while such charges are pending nor after being found guilty of an infraction, seek to drop, withdraw from, or change the grading to a pass/D/fail basis in any course for which charges were brought. The board may, in assessing a penalty, consider whether such penalty will have any practical effect upon the student's academic record and recommend such action that it deems just and appropriate. A student's withdrawal from the college while charges are pending, or any time after the rendering of a decision in an academic infractions case, will not preclude the addition of such information to the student's permanent record of the College.

The associate provost's office will summarize infractions and actions recommended, and that information can be used, without reference to specific students, for reporting to the Committee on Academic Standards, in training sessions for new members of AIB, and for periodic release to campus media. Notifications to students of results will be kept permanently; however, a winnowing of all other materials will generally occur after four years.

SOME POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME AREAS OF ACADEMIC HONESTY

Proper acknowledgment of sources is the basis of academic honesty. Distinguish in your notes and your rough drafts the ideas that are your own from those you have learned from another source. If you restate or reword another person's expressions, be sure to give credit where credit is due. This principle of honesty in acknowledgment also applies, of course, to the weaving together of various people's ideas and words. Always make notation of the source of each idea while doing research, so that you may correctly footnote its origin. In general, if you have questions about correct citation or about other issues such as collaboration, ask your instructor for advice.

There are four areas of academic honesty that seem to be most commonly problematic: collaboration, paraphrasing, the mosaic, and proper acknowledgment of sources. The following explanations may help you avoid accidental plagiarism.

Collaboration. Collaboration on projects is always subject to the instructor's definition and approval. When appropriate, a great deal of learning can come from the exchange of ideas. Discussions with other students, with your instructor, and with other faculty members can help you clarify your ideas. Likewise, it is often useful to ask someone else to go over a first version of an assignment and to make suggestions for its improvement. But when you submit academic work (such as examinations, homework assignments, laboratory reports and notebooks, and term papers), this work must be your work and no one else's. You need not footnote every conversation you have had, but if anyone has given you special assistance, it is both necessary and polite to thank that person, either in an introduction or in the notes.

Paraphrase. A paraphrase is a restatement or rewording, often in condensed form, of another person's statements. It is often best to use direct quotation for brief passages, but it is important to know how to paraphrase because most of your note-taking should be in this form. Once again, when you come to write your paper, be sure to give credit where credit is due. If you use a paraphrase, which may perhaps be an excellent summary, you must always tell your reader, either in the text of your paper or in the notes, where the material came from. This means that you must take careful notes when you are studying, and make an exact record of the source, including the page number. In note-taking and in assignments submitted, also be careful to indicate when you are copying the exact words, design, or symbolic (e.g., mathematic) formulation of the author instead of paraphrasing.

Mosaic. A mosaic is a special case of paraphrasing without adequate acknowledgments; it is a form of plagiarism. A mosaic is a piecing together of ideas and quotations that you create in the course of your research. With proper notation, this work may be creative and original by reason of the sources that are woven together and skill with which they are presented. Nearly all research papers are to some extent mosaic. However, if the sources of these ideas and quotations are not carefully identified by adequate notation, you will mislead your reader into thinking that all the information presented is your own. A mosaic without adequate notation is an obvious instance of plagiarism.

To avoid this kind of problem, always keep a notation of the source of each idea while doing research, so that when you write the paper you may footnote each source as you use it. Be sure to inform your reader as to the source of all of the ideas presented, so that your reader can appreciate the distinctive connections that you have provided.

Proper acknowledgment of sources. Acknowledging your sources, in a complete and accurate manner, is the basis of academic honesty. Obviously, it is not always possible to give the source of each of your ideas. You may, for instance, wish to include facts and ideas that you learned in some previous reading. There is nothing wrong with doing this.

However, where you are able to trace the source, be sure to give it and—even more important—when you are reading specially for an assignment, take notes carefully. Distinguish in your notes and your rough draft the ideas that are your own, and note those you have learned from another source. Distinguish among your sources as well, so that you do not confuse the ideas of one author with those of another. If you carefully keep track of sources, you will have no difficulty when it comes to writing the assignment.

One final warning: Do not, as many students do, fall into the trap of adding the notes after you have written the paper. If you do that, you will almost certainly omit some and get others wrong. Include the notes as you go along, either at the bottom of the page as footnotes or on another sheet of paper to be appended at the end of your work.