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# Cheating, Plagiarism and Fraud

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# Academic Dishonesty

## Cheating, Plagiarism & Fraud

The Student Discipline Bylaw and related Procedures provide guidance to those individuals charged with administering disciplinary action (“Disciplinary Authority”) while, at the same time, outline the prohibited conduct and the right of appeal.

### 2.0 Rule/Principle

2.1 As members of the University Community, students have an obligation to act with academic integrity and in a fair and reasonable manner toward their peers, faculty, staff, administration and the physical property of the University. Academic integrity and personal conduct, both on-campus and off-campus in university-sanctioned activities, are critical elements in achieving these obligations.

2.2 Students will be subject to disciplinary action under this bylaw.  
(Excerpt from the University of Manitoba’s Student Discipline Bylaw, 2009)

Visit our website [umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy](http://umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy) for more information including our tutorials on academic integrity, student conduct and the discipline process, as well as links to policies and other resources.

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## **The purpose of this handout is to**

- help if you have been accused of an academic violation;
- help you understand academic violations better so you can avoid committing them inadvertently;
- help you decide what to do should you suspect someone else of committing an academic violation.

It is important to know the rules including the University of Manitoba's Student Discipline Bylaw and procedures, and the Academic Integrity regulations found in the Calendar under "General Academic Regulations and Requirements". The University also has policies on research ethics and intellectual property. You can obtain copies of these policies from the University Governance website, Office of the University Secretary (312 Administration Building) or Student Advocacy (519 University Centre).

There are handouts and online tutorials available on plagiarism and related topics. Your course outlines should make reference to cheating and plagiarism. Excellent writing guides are available in the Libraries and the Book Store. Every student involved in essay or report writing should follow an appropriate style guide in order to correctly and completely acknowledge all sources and forms of assistance. The Academic Learning Centre (201 Tier Building) provides support to students who need assistance with writing academic papers.

## **It is the responsibility of the student to know the rules!**

The University places a high value on academic honesty. It has implemented various measures in an attempt to curb academic dishonesty:

- examinations are invigilated;
- individuals taking examinations are required to sign in and to display a student ID card;
- different versions of an exam may be alternated row by row;
- assignments done out of class time are subject to other forms of vigilance and scrutiny;
- faculty can often tell that an essay has been plagiarized, even if they do not at first know the exact source of unacknowledged passages;
- faculty are aware of various forms of internet plagiarism which may include downloading papers from the internet or purchasing an essay from an agency.

Despite everyone's best efforts, research suggests there is a fairly high level of cheating - well above the numbers of students detected. Some cheating and plagiarism is due to student ignorance of rules and obligations. One goal of this handout is to reduce academic dishonesty due to ignorance. Not knowing the rules is not an excuse.

**Students who cheat, cheat their fellow students most of all.**

## What to do if you are accused of cheating or plagiarism

1. You may have an emotional response (anger, anxiety, fear) when you are informed of the allegation. Do what you can to master your feelings so you won't say anything you may later regret. Student Counselling and Career Centre (474 University Centre) can help in this regard.
  2. Answer questions honestly. The disciplinary authority has an obligation to investigate and to try to determine the truth.
  3. Remember, there is an appeal process available to you. If the disciplinary authority investigating the allegations against you seems unwilling to hear your side, you can appeal. Remember, too, that the burden of proof is on the University.
  4. Consider the evidence against you. Evidence does not have to be conclusive. The burden of proof is based on the 'balance of probabilities' that is, if a reasonable person can say: "Based on this evidence, cheating probably took place."
- **An instructor who believes a student is responsible for an academic violation cannot impose a disciplinary action but must refer the matter to the Department Head/Dean.**
  - **You have a right to appeal the finding of facts (whether found responsible), the disposition determined by the disciplinary authority (disciplinary action) or both.**
  - **Lying or fabricating evidence may lead to more severe disciplinary actions.**

If you run into a disciplinary authority who, in your opinion, is handling an academic dishonesty accusation poorly, seek advice from the Student Advocacy office. Here are examples of some **improper reactions** to academic dishonesty:

The disciplinary authority:

- A. appears to take the matter very personally, looks at the alleged offender with loathing, and says some hurtful things.
- B. warns the student not to appeal because much worse could happen than the sanction being imposed. The calendar may be cited in support of this claim, the instructor may say something like: "You could be expelled if you appeal!"
- C. offers no reason for believing the student cheated, but demands proof that the student did not.
- D. offers superficial evidence for an accusation based on a generalization or a judgment of the person, (e.g., "I can't believe anyone your age would say that." or "The writing is too good for a student.")

## Disciplinary Actions

Various factors are considered by disciplinary authorities when determining outcomes for academic dishonesty:

- was the offense planned or the result of an impulse?
- has the student been honest and cooperative during the investigative process?
- is this a first offense?
- does the student appear to be genuinely sorry for the offense?
- were other students compromised through the actions of this student?
- was this student irresponsible in not knowing that the offense was an offense?

The Student Discipline Bylaw outlines the specific disciplinary actions available for each disciplinary authority.

There is no rule about which disciplinary actions are applied for which violations, but there are patterns in the ways that disciplinary actions have been applied in the past. Patterns are not rules and disciplinary authorities are free to depart from them.

**Failure (FDisc).** This is the normal disciplinary action when the violation is considered intentional and is a first violation. Often a failing grade is given along with a grade classification DISC (disciplinary action).

A notation of academic dishonesty may also be added to the student's transcript. This may be removed by the student after the time period indicated in the decision letter has elapsed.

**Severe disciplinary actions apply if there is evidence of planning or involvement of others in the violation.** Suspension for one year or more is typical for a student who was previously found responsible, even if the violation resulting in suspension is less serious.

**Suspension** due to a disciplinary matter results in a **transcript notation**. After serving the suspension, a student may make a request in writing to the Registrar that this notice be removed.

**Expulsion**, unlike suspension, is deemed to be permanent. Expulsion is typically reserved for very serious cases which may also involve criminal prosecution.

Criminal prosecution is reserved for criminal acts, such as fraud, forgery, theft and impersonation.

## **Fraud**

The regulations on scholastic offenses in the Calendar describe a number of fraudulent acts. While innocent acts can sometimes be mistaken for cheating or plagiarism, this rarely happens with fraud. Fraud is usually a deliberate lie. For example, submitting a forged doctor's letter, failing to disclose information on an application or any other form of misrepresentation is fraudulent. Consequently, it is often dealt with more severely.

## **How to appeal**

1. You may appeal a discipline decision. You have at least two levels of appeal open to you. Each faculty/school has its own Local Discipline Committee (LDC) that hears student's appeals. The University Discipline Committee hears appeals arising from LDC decisions.
2. If you are responsible for the violation but you feel the disciplinary action is too severe, you can also appeal. You may obtain assistance/information from the Student Advocacy office, Room 519 University Centre.

## **How offenses are recorded**

1. A copy of the decision letter and related material will be kept in your student file.
2. There will be a notation on the student record and the official transcript if a student is suspended or expelled.
3. The Student Discipline Bylaw outlines reporting responsibilities for the academic staff and disciplinary authorities.

**It is your right to know how information about you is retained, and for how long.**

## **How to avoid cheating and plagiarism**

### **In tests and exams**

1. Do not sit near friends.
2. Do not use study notes written on small pieces of paper.
3. Shield your answer sheet so that others cannot see it.
4. Do not take notes, books or other items into a test or exam except those expressly authorized. If unsure about what is permitted, always ask.
5. If calculators are permitted, remove the cover.
6. Do not gaze around the room when writing a test or exam.
7. Do not communicate with any other student during a test or exam: communicate only with the instructor or proctor.
8. Arrive on time. Hand in all papers as required.
9. If you hear of anyone obtaining information about a test or exam in advance, report it to the instructor without delay.
10. If procedures for administering or supervising tests or exams seem inadequate to you, let the instructor or other authority know what your concerns are.
11. Report to the invigilator or instructor any unusual or suspicious behaviour of other students writing the test or exam.

### **In essays, reports and other assignments**

1. Know the rules, including the specific rules for the specific assignment.
2. Do not work with a fellow student on any assignment unless authorized to do so. It is called 'inappropriate collaboration' if you exceed the amount of group work expected by the professor. Make sure you clearly understand the professor's expectations for individual and group work on each assignment/project.
3. Acknowledge all assistance received, including help from friends or others in terms of proofreading, suggestions or information.
4. Do not submit work that is not entirely yours, i.e., use of another student's essay, use of a downloaded essay from the Internet, use of an assignment purchased from a service/agency.
5. Do not cite in your bibliography any books, articles or other sources, including the Internet, which you have not used for the assignment in question.
6. Do not lend your work to other students unless you feel certain they will not use it dishonestly.
7. Do not hand in the same work more than once; whether for different classes or if you are repeating a course.

8. Keep a photocopy of all assignments, essays, and reports you hand in to be graded. Keep rough copies and notes until your final grade is received. Notes and rough copies can constitute valuable evidence that your work is your own.
9. When saving electronic files, save the drafts of assignments/ papers under different versions. This maintains a record of your work as it develops to the final version.
10. If you submit an assignment by sliding it under an instructor's office door (not recommended), confirm the next day or as soon as you can that the assignment was received. Make a note of the actual time and date of submission. Better yet deliver it to the general office and have it signed for by the staff.
11. The assignment you prepare for one course must not be resubmitted in whole or in part at any time. This is called 'duplicate submission'.
12. When in doubt about any practice, ask your instructor. Do not rely on friends, relatives or fellow students for information about what is acceptable academic practice in a particular course or discipline.
13. When material you read impresses you, be particularly careful to use your own words. Use quotation marks and cite sources whenever you use the words of another, even phrases only one or two words in length. Acknowledge all sources of information and inspiration.

## **What to do if you know or suspect someone else of dishonesty**

Anyone who suspects someone else of committing a scholastic violation has several choices:

- talk about your suspicions with the other person
- report the suspicion to the Instructor/Department Head/Dean
- remain uninvolved

Before deciding to remain uninvolved, consider the big picture. Who benefits most from your lack of action? The wrong-doer. If you feel a moral obligation to try to make your university a more fair and honest place, try to find a way to get involved. Please contact the Student Advocacy office for advice.

**Talking to the other person:** Many University of Manitoba students hope to enter professions where peer monitoring is an important means of maintaining professional ethical standards. If you decide to talk to someone you suspect of academic dishonesty, make sure you are familiar with the policy on scholastic violations. Then consider the evidence you have that a dishonest act has or will take place. Be clear about your own motives and goals. You may want to consult someone you trust before undertaking the difficult task of talking to someone you suspect of wrong doing.



**Reporting a suspect:** There are two ways to make such a report: (1) by giving the instructor, head or dean a tip; (2) by giving evidence. When you give a tip, you need not disclose your identity. You are merely advising the instructor, head or dean that you suspect academic dishonesty took place (or will probably take place). It is up to that person to investigate and gather evidence needed to charge the offenders. You do not become a witness. A tip can be written, phoned or given in person.

Sometimes a tip will not be useful because the instructor is unable to find any evidence in support of the claims made. From the University's point of view it is always preferable to have a witness willing to state what they have seen or heard.

If you have any questions, please contact our office. The Student Advocacy office maintains a resource file on the topic of Academic Integrity for students and staff. Test your understanding of academic honesty by accessing our web-site.

## Resources

The Student Advocacy office offers presentations and workshops on academic integrity and related topics. We maintain the Student Discipline website that provides helpful information for faculty and staff handling a discipline case. Visit us at [umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy](http://umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy) for more information and to view our educational materials including online tutorials.

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***We gratefully acknowledge permission to adapt  
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**Student Advocacy**  
**Room 519 University Centre**  
**The University of Manitoba**  
**Tel:** 474-7423 **Fax:** 474-7567  
**Email:** [Student\\_Advocacy@UManitoba.ca](mailto:Student_Advocacy@UManitoba.ca)  
**Website Address:** [umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy](http://umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy)



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# Student Affairs

Student Services

**Student Advocacy**

**Room 519 University Centre**

**The University of Manitoba**

**Tel:** 474-7423 **Fax:** 474-7567

**Email:** [Student\\_Advocacy@UManitoba.ca](mailto:Student_Advocacy@UManitoba.ca)

**Website Address:** [umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy](http://umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy)