Academic Honesty and Questions of Plagiarism

The foundation of Kenyon's academic program is the integrity of student work. Plagiarism, cheating of any nature in academic work, fabrication and misrepresentation of research results, or submitting the same paper or substantial portions of it for two separate courses without prior consent of the instructors concerned, are examples of extremely serious offenses. Penalties for violations of academic honesty are among the most serious the College may impose; they include conditional enrollment for a stated period of time, a grade of F on an assignment or for a course, dismissal from a course, suspension or dismissal from Kenyon, and/or other appropriate actions.

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 a piece of scholarly or artistic work that represents the ideas of another person or source is presented as if those ideas are the original contribution of the person presenting the work in question.

Such misrepresentation is always plagiarism no matter what kind of ideas are used (written, oral, graphic, analytic, or artistic). Such work is also plagiarism whether or not the misrepresentation was an intentional attempt to deceive.

Nearly all charges of an academic infraction are related to students' written work. The following are examples of student work that must be considered in a discussion of academic infractions, but it is not intended to be an exhaustive list: examinations, laboratory reports and research results, papers, Senior Exercises, and tests. That it is dishonest to give or receive illicit aid on a test or an examination is generally understood; the seriousness of plagiarizing a paper, artwork, or computer program, or assisting another to do so, may need further explanation.

When a student puts his or her name on a paper, on artwork, or on a computer program, and submits it to an instructor, that student has certified that the content is his or her own except where specific and appropriate acknowledgment is made that some parts of the work have been borrowed from another source. Learning from another artist, scholar, or student is commendable, but to use ideas (written, oral, graphic, analytic, or artistic) or the phraseology of another person without such acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism. The submission of a purchased or borrowed paper as one's own work is 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.

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 the students' academic development, and they expect to receive original work in return. Students who attempt to circumvent this aspect of their education by submitting the same work or substantial portions of it for two separate courses without prior consent of both instructors, allowing their work to go forth as original in two distinct settings, are thus guilty of self-plagiarism. Also, submitting the same piece of work for two courses is manifestly unfair to other students who receive an equal amount of credit for significantly 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.

Scholarship and Academic Honesty

Proper footnoting and expression of scholarly debts are essential aspects of academic honesty and good scholarship.

Kenyon faculty and staff members consider their main responsibility to be the development of students' intellectual creativity and scholarly ability. Footnoting, the proper organization of examinations, papers, and other assignments, the use of quotation marks, and the proper indication of sources and scholarly debts are positive aids by which faculty members and students give recognition to the intellectual traditions from which they have borrowed, and help in the retrieval of such information in the future. These components of good scholarship recreate the intellectual dynamic that went into making the final product and give the reader the context within which the student's work should be understood. Because of the seriousness of plagiarism or academic dishonesty, students are urged to consult with their instructors if they have any questions about proper attribution of sources.

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 such 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., mathematical) 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.

**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 of the AIB are appointed by student government 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 cannot be heard by the full board, the associate provost, in consultation with available members of the board, may hear cases when the College is not in session or when the full board is otherwise not constituted.

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.

Instructors should respond to inquiries concerning the forms that academic infractions may take in the particular kinds of work required in their courses. Instructors are responsible for detecting instances of academic infractions and dealing with suspected instances according to the procedures adopted by the faculty. 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 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.

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 and decide the degree of culpability in the case—which can range from none to severe culpability—and recommend penalties, if any, to the associate provost.

The 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 return to consult with the board personally on his or her objections to the recommendation, and will seek to reach a new consensus.

It is the responsibility of the 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.

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 dean for academic advising or the dean of students for inclusion in the student’s file, and the registrar’s office.

Materials collected for an academic hearing will be filed by the chair of the AIB at the conclusion of that hearing. At the end of each year, these files will be delivered to the associate provost’s office, where
they will remain until all students charged have graduated or withdrawn from 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.