

Academic Integrity: Definitions and Guidelines for Penalties

The following guidelines define for the Skidmore community a context of values within which individual and institutional decisions on academic integrity can be made. The guidelines, developed by the Integrity Board and reviewed by the Honor Code Commission, Appeals Board, the faculty at large, and the President's Office, reflect Skidmore's serious commitment to academic honesty. No set of guidelines can, of course, define all possible types or degrees of academic dishonesty; thus, the following descriptions should be understood as examples of infractions rather than an exhaustive list, and the recommended penalties are presented as guiding examples, as well. The guidelines are intended as touchstones for complainants and for the judicial boards of the College, and as a deterrent to potential offenders. Individual faculty members and the judicial boards will continue to judge each case according to its particular merits and demerits. **It is every student's responsibility to become familiar with the standards of academic integrity at the College. Violations of the academic Honor Code will be reported on law school applications, transfer applications, etc., and are likely to render the student ineligible for membership in any Skidmore-sponsored academic honor societies, for participation in the First Year Experience as a Peer Mentor, and for academic and some leadership prizes awarded by the College.**

Plagiarism

Presenting as one's own, the work of another person (for example, the words, ideas, information, data, evidence, organizing principles, or style of presentation of someone else). Plagiarism includes paraphrasing or summarizing without acknowledgment, submission of another student's work as one's own, the purchase of prepared research or completed papers or projects, and the unacknowledged use of research sources gathered by someone else. Failure to indicate accurately the extent and precise nature of one's reliance on other sources is also a form of plagiarism. Thus, the use of AI to generate ideas, arguments, or language without instructor authorization constitutes plagiarism. The student is responsible for understanding the legitimate use of sources, the appropriate ways of acknowledging his or her academic, scholarly, or creative indebtedness, and the consequences for violating the Skidmore Honor Code. **THE JUDICIAL BOARDS OF THE COLLEGE WILL NOT REGARD CLAIMS OF IGNORANCE, OF UNINTENTIONAL ERROR, AND OF ACADEMIC OR PERSONAL PRESSURES AS AN ADEQUATE DEFENSE FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE HONOR CODE.**

Minor offenses: e.g., failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a few phrases, sentences, or an idea (though not an idea of importance to the thesis or central purpose of the paper or project).

More serious offenses: e.g., failure to acknowledge the quotation or paraphrase of a few longer, paragraph-length sections of a paper, failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a major idea or the source(s) of important pieces of evidence or information, or the source(s) for an ordering principle central to the paper's or project's structure.

Major offenses: e.g., failure to acknowledge the source (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized) of major sections or passages in the paper or project, the unacknowledged use of several major ideas or extensive reliance on another person's data, evidence, or critical method; submitting as one's own, work borrowed, stolen, or purchased from someone else.

Penalties for Plagiarism

All offenses observed by faculty or students must be reported to the Associate Dean of the Faculty (ADOF) with responsibility for student academic affairs. The ADOF will keep a confidential record of

the offense, the evidence, and the penalty. The Associate Dean will also make certain that the student understands their rights, the nature and importance of academic integrity, and the probable consequences of a second violation.

In the case of minor offenses (as defined above), the instructor might make any one or a combination of the following responses:

- warning without further penalty
- required rewriting of the paper, but without grade credit
- lowering of the paper or project grade by one full grade

In the case of more serious offenses and major offenses (defined above), the instructor might impose one or more of the following:

- failure on the plagiarized essay, report, or project (no revision or supplemental work accepted)
- failure in the course (more appropriate to a major offense)

Be aware that some faculty maintain a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism and will fail a student for the course regardless of the level of offense.

Cheating on Examinations

Giving or receiving unauthorized help before, during, or after an examination. Examples of unauthorized help include collaboration of any sort during an examination (unless specifically approved by the instructor), collaboration before an examination (when such collaboration is specifically forbidden by the instructor), the use of notes, books, or other aids or technologies during an exam (unless permitted by the instructor), looking upon someone else's exam during the examination period, intentionally allowing another student to look upon one's exam, and the passing of any exam information to students who have not yet taken the examination. While the exam is ongoing, students may not discuss test items with any student, including those not enrolled in the course. Any talking during an exam, or other mode of communication (including use of cell phones), constitutes a violation of the Honor Code. The content of the conversation does not matter; the act of communicating violates the Honor Code.

Penalties for Cheating on Examinations

The great variety of exam situations and procedures makes it difficult to outline different degrees of severity. However, in determining an appropriate sanction, instructors and judicial boards might take the following into account:

- the degree to which the cheating was premeditated or the student(s) collaborated in receiving or giving unauthorized help on the exam
- the percentage of the student's exam which was affected by the incident
- the degree to which the examination procedures in general were jeopardized or other students affected by the cheating incident

Penalties will generally include one or more of the following:

- failure on the examination
- lowering of the course grade by one full grade or more
- failure in the course
- academic disciplinary probation, another type of academic sanction, suspension, or dismissal

Other Forms of Academic Dishonesty

Multiple Submission

The submission of substantial portions of the same work for credit more than once **(including high school work)**, without the prior explicit consent of the instructor(s) to whom the material is being (or has in the past been) submitted.

Penalties Recommended

- failure on the work submitted
- failure in the course(s)
- academic disciplinary probation or other academic sanction

Forgery

Forging another person's signature on academic or other official documents (e.g., the signing of a faculty advisor approval, or the misuse of attendance sign-in sheets).

Penalties Recommended

- cancellation of the privilege or service gained by the forged signature
- academic disciplinary probation or other academic sanction

Sabotage

The deliberate destruction, damaging, or theft of another's work or working materials (including art works, lab experiments, computer programs, term papers, or projects).

Penalties Recommended

- failure in the course
- academic disciplinary probation, another type of academic sanction, or a recommendation for suspension
- monetary fines

Theft, Damage, or Displacement of Library Materials

The effort to remove uncharged library materials from the library, defacing or damaging library materials, intentional displacement and hoarding of materials within the library for one's unauthorized private use, the abuse of reserve-book privileges. These and related offenses constitute an abuse of the college community's central resource for the advancement of learning. In certain cases, the failure to return materials to the Library in a timely way when these materials are needed by other members of the Skidmore community may be treated as an academic integrity infraction.

Penalties Recommended

- monetary fines
- limitation or revocation of library privileges
- academic disciplinary probation, another type of academic sanction, or a recommendation for suspension

Computer Abuse and Fraud

Includes the abuses defined in these guidelines under “plagiarism,” “multiple submission,” “sabotage,” “unauthorized collaboration,” “falsification,” and “alteration.” Members of the Skidmore community are expected to observe the highest standards of academic and social integrity as they use computers for class, office, and individual projects. Such offenses as computer plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, entry of another person’s computing directory, data theft or unauthorized alteration, inappropriate use of the electronic mail, and other malicious or dishonest computer activities will be treated as serious infringements of integrity. The official “Code of Ethics for Academic Computing” is available from Skidmore’s Computer Center.

The College recognizes the following EDUCOM policy statement:

“Respect for intellectual labor and creativity is vital to academic discourse and enterprise. This principle applies to works of all authors and publishers in all media. It encompasses respect for the right to acknowledgment, right to privacy, and right to determine the form, manner, and terms of publication and distribution. Because electronic information is volatile and easily reproduced, respect for the work is especially critical in computer environments. Violations of authorial integrity, including plagiarism, invasion of privacy, unauthorized access, and trade secret and copyright violations, may be grounds for sanctions against members of the academic community.”

Software Piracy: The College forbids the unauthorized duplication of copyrighted software. Even if a program does not contain copy protection to prevent unauthorized duplication, it is illegal to copy commercial software for your own use or by others. Likewise, knowingly accepting or using copies of “pirated” software violates the Skidmore College Honor Code.

Penalties Recommended

- failure on the material in question when academic credit is at issue
- failure in the course
- limitation or revocation of computer privileges
- academic disciplinary probation, another type of academic sanction, or a recommendation of suspension

Unauthorized Collaboration

(Closely related to plagiarism or cheating): student collaboration on projects, papers, or other academic exercises which is regarded as inappropriate by the instructor(s). The most common faculty assumption is that work submitted for credit is entirely one’s own; however, standards on appropriate and inappropriate collaboration vary widely among individual faculty and the different disciplines. Students who want to confer or collaborate with one another on work receiving academic credit (e.g., homework assignments, lab reports, exam preparations, research projects, essays, etc.) *should make certain of the instructor’s expectations and standards.*

Penalties Recommended

- failure on the work submitted
- failure in the course
- academic disciplinary probation or other academic sanction

Falsification

The misrepresentation or purposeful mishandling of material or fabrication of information in an academic exercise, academic process, or academic assignment (e.g., the falsification of experimental or computer data, the construction of false documents or the misleading alteration of documents, the false or misleading citation of sources, the purposeful mishandling or misappropriation of registration materials, etc.)

Penalties Recommended

- failure on the exercise or material submitted for credit
- failure in the course
- cancellation of the privilege obtained through falsification
- academic disciplinary probation or other academic sanction

Alteration

Altering material without the instructor's knowledge or consent in negotiation for a higher grade.

Penalties Recommended

- failure on the material altered
- failure in the course
- academic disciplinary probation or other academic sanction

Multiple or Subsequent Violations of Academic Integrity

When a student violates the Honor Code on more than one academic exercise (whether those infractions occurred during the same or different periods of time, or in the same or different courses), Skidmore regards the offenses as an especially serious subversion of our educational mission. The issue becomes even more egregious when the student has been confronted with the first infraction before the second is committed or discovered.

Whenever the Associate Dean receives information on a multiple offense, the Associate Dean may request a hearing before a judicial board or initiate an Administrative Hearing. The Associate Dean may also request a hearing for a single but especially serious academic offense. The student's social integrity record may be considered at the hearing along with the academic integrity record. Generally in cases of multiple infractions, or an especially serious single offense, the judicial board will consider recommending to the Dean of the Faculty & Vice President for Academic Affairs a one-semester suspension or dismissal from the College, depending on the severity of the violation(s) and other aspects of the individual case.

Other Consequences

Violations of the academic Honor Code will be reported on law school, transfer, study abroad, and similar applications when requested by external organizations. Further, academic integrity violations make the student ineligible for the Dean's List (for the period of the sanction), membership in Skidmore and national academic honor societies, Skidmore academic prizes (including those awarded at Honors Convocation and at graduation), College Honors, Department and Program Honors, some leadership awards, and participation in the First Year Experience as a Peer Mentor. For details of this and other academic integrity policies, please consult with the Associate Dean of the Faculty with responsibility for student academic affairs.