

**YORK UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

ACADEMIC HONESTY: WHAT IS IT?

Prepared by Erin C. Ross, Ph.D. Updated by S. Murtha, Ph.D. February 2010.

The Department of Psychology, Faculty of Health, operates according to the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty, which is available electronically through the following URL <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69>

This handout has been prepared to highlight information in this policy, but it is no substitute for reading the Senate Policy in its entirety.

First, the Senate policy describes several forms of breaches of academic honesty.

1. Cheating: The Senate policy defines cheating as: "the attempt to gain an improper advantage in an academic evaluation". It includes: "obtaining a copy of an examination before it is officially available or learning an examination question before it is officially available, copying another person's answer to an examination question; consulting an unauthorized source during an examination". If you are in possession of materials other than those designated by the course instructor at an exam, you are cheating. If you copy answers from the person in front of or beside you at an exam, you are cheating.

Another part of the definition of cheating includes 'dual submission' of a single work. If you write a paper for one course and submit it for grading, and hand in the same or substantially the same paper to another course for grading, you are considered to be cheating. This does not mean that you cannot work on the same topic for two courses or even submit the same paper. If you wish to do this you must seek the permission of both instructors. Otherwise you leave yourself open to a charge of cheating.

Another form of cheating is offering for sale or preparing for submission essays or other assignments (whole or in part), to be submitted by a student other than yourself for appraisal. If you obtain an essay and hand it in as your own, that is cheating.

2. Impersonation: This is very straightforward. The policy states that "it is a breach of academic honesty to have someone impersonate one's self in class, in a test or examination or in connection with any other type of assignment in a course. Both the impersonator and the individual impersonated may be charged".
3. Plagiarism: The policy defines plagiarism broadly, to include misappropriation of the work of another. It includes "presentation of all or part of another person's

published work as something one has written", and "paraphrasing another's writing without proper acknowledgement".

If you submit a paper that is a copy of the relevant sections from (a) a course textbook; (b) another textbook; (c) a review paper; or (d) an encyclopaedia, you are plagiarizing. Most students understand that this is plagiarism. Most students also seem to understand that you need to reference ideas, concepts or theories. For example, if discussing behaviourism in a paper, most students understand that they must reference either their course text or the book/article from which they took the information.

The most frequently occurring form of plagiarism is the use of an author's or authors' words, without placing quotation marks (i.e., " ") around them and including a page reference for the material. For example, in the definition of plagiarism above, quotation marks appear around the material that is copied word for word from the Senate policy. It is not sufficient simply to indicate that the material was from the Senate policy if you are using the exact words of a source.

It is also not sufficient to change a few words in a sentence or paragraph taken from a source and include it in your paper. If you do so, you are committing what has been termed "mosaic plagiarism". An example of "mosaic plagiarism" is attached at the end of this handout. Remember, if you use the language of the source, you **MUST** quote directly. If, after looking at the example of mosaic plagiarism, you don't understand how this is a problem, then **YOU** have a problem.

As well, the definition above states that using someone else's organizational scheme without acknowledgement is not acceptable. Often, articles that review research on a particular topic are useful sources for writing papers (very often found in journals such as Psychological Bulletin or Psychological Review). If you make substantial use of such an article, acknowledge this. If you use the subheadings of the author(s), you must use quotation marks. Generally speaking, summarizing a review article for a paper doesn't meet the requirements for original work.

4. Other actions covered by the Senate policy include:
 - (1) "Improper research practices", including "dishonest reporting of investigative results either through fabrication or falsification" (this could mean faking data for a research assignment);
 - (2) "Aiding or abetting academic misconduct" which means actively helping someone else or passively allowing someone else to engage in academic dishonesty;
 - (3) "Obstruction of the academic activities of another";
 - (4) "Falsification or unauthorized modification of an academic record", including transcripts, letters of recommendation, or grades as well as "any other official document" of the University.

Why is this Important?

The Faculty takes academic dishonesty seriously and, as a Department, we fully support the policy. It's important because the purpose of being in a university is to learn, and academic dishonesty defeats this purpose. With regard to plagiarism, citing sources properly is important because (a) you are graded on your written work, and if you plagiarize and go undetected, you are receiving the benefit of the grade unfairly; and (b) the reader of your written work may wish to go to the sources of your material for further information. We regard a university education as an incredibly valuable experience that is diminished by academic dishonesty. If you do not work while you are obtaining your education, then a degree is nothing more than the piece of paper hanging on the wall. Take the time to learn.

Some final points

1. Ignorance is no excuse. You will all receive this handout and discuss the matter in class so you cannot say at some point in the future "I didn't know".
2. This is not designed to replace the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. Please read the policy carefully for the process and the details.
3. Do not underestimate our resourcefulness in detecting plagiarism.
4. Don't underestimate our perceptual skills either. It is amazingly easy to detect cheating during examinations. To protect yourself, don't spend a lot of time staring at the person beside you or in front of you during an exam.
5. Finally, if you have any doubts whatsoever, ASK.

The following sources are recommended:

To find out more about academic integrity go to York's academic integrity website for students: <http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.htm>

To find out about more about plagiarism feel free to go to:
<http://www.plagiarism.org/>

For a resource about how to cite properly go to The publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.). (2009). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Or see the following website:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

AN EXAMPLE OF “MOSAIC PLAGIARISM

ORIGINAL SOURCE

Prior to discussing the experimental evidence on achievement motivation and risk-taking, it is important to note that risk-taking has been regarded as central to the theory of achievement motivation (e.g., McClelland, 1958). One of the original characteristics that was hypothesized to distinguish success-oriented from failure-threatened persons was risk preference which was assumed to reflect very different affective responses to achievement cues by these two groups of people. In addition, risk-taking was the first area in which hypotheses derived from the theory were tested. It was after these early research efforts that investigators began to ask if achievement-related motives were also related to level of aspiration (e.g., Moulton, 1965) and performance in other achievement settings (e.g., Atkinson & Reitman, 1958). This research is being summarized here because it examines risk-taking behaviour which is of relevance to this thesis and to indicate that individual differences in achievement-related motives do not reliably predict this behaviour.

The original study conducted by McClelland to test his hypotheses regarding the relationship of risk-taking and achievement-related motives was to become the characteristic research design in this area (McClelland, 1958). Two related aspects of the risk-taking situation used in this study must be pointed out. First, it was assumed that the setting used in this study contained affective cues which would engage achievement-related motives. Second, it was a task in which the ability of the participant was related to the task outcome which, in part, determines the affective value.

Original Source: Hewitt, E.C. (1987). *Information and affective value in risk-taking behaviour*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada.

EXAMPLE OF MOSAIC PLAGIARISM

Risk-taking has been viewed as important to the theory of achievement motivation. One of the first attributes that was thought to distinguish between success-oriented and failure-threatened people was their preference for risk and it was assumed that these differing choices are based on different “affective responses to achievement cues” (p. 17). Risk-taking is also important to the theory because it was one of the first behavioural areas in which hypotheses derived from the theory of achievement motivation were tested. After these early research efforts, other researchers went on to test it with different types of behaviour (e.g., level of aspiration).

McClelland’s (1958) original study testing the association between risk-taking and achievement-related motives has become the typical research design. There are two important facets to this study. First the *outcome of the task* used in the experiment *was related to the ability of the subjects.* Second, the affective cues of the experimental task were assumed to engage achievement-related motives in the subjects.

[Note: Underlined sections of this example are taken word-for-word from the original source to the left without quotations marks; this is plagiarism. Sections appearing in italics are slight modifications of the original which, taken in the context of the plagiarized wording, contribute to the overall plagiarism.]