

Academic Integrity for TAs

At the University of Waterloo, TA's play an important role in encouraging academic integrity in the classroom and identifying suspected academic misconduct.

What do I do if I suspect academic misconduct?

A TA who has reason to believe an academic offence has been committed is required to report the matter to the instructor of the course AND the relevant undergraduate or graduate Associate Dean of the Faculty. The Associate Dean will investigate, if warranted, and render a decision.

Academic Offences and Tips to Avoid Them¹

Unauthorized collaboration: *“Co-operation or collaboration in the completion of an academic assignment, in whole or in part, beyond what the instructor has indicated is acceptable.”*

For example, students working together on an individual assignment, or someone else (e.g., a tutor, family member or friend etc.) writing, re-writing or altering an assignment.

Students might engage in unauthorized collaboration because they are unclear about the level of group work permissible for an assignment or because they are struggling with the content/assignment. To avoid instances of unauthorized collaboration:

- Be explicit, both verbally and in writing, about whether collaboration is allowed for each assignment, and if so, the extent to which it is allowed
- Understand the instructor's expectations for collaboration on each assessment so you can answer student questions and identify issues when marking
- Encourage students to reach out to you or visit your office hours if they need help understanding course concepts or the assignment expectations
- Encourage students to complete an [Assignment Checklist for Group Submissions](#)
- Refer students to [resources and best practices for working in groups](#)

Plagiarism: *“Presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others (whether attributed or anonymous) as one's own in any work submitted whether or not for grading purposes.”*

For example, using someone else's work, data, research, etc., in part or in whole, without proper acknowledgement (e.g., citations and a reference list), or re-submitting work without permission or acknowledgement.

A student might unintentionally plagiarize because they are not aware they need to cite or they might forget to include one or multiple citations. A student might intentionally plagiarize because they have left something until the last minute or they are struggling to understand the course content/complete the assignment. To avoid instances of plagiarism:

¹ For a comprehensive list, review [Policy 71](#)

- Ensure all of your teaching materials properly acknowledge sources (including course notes, PPTs, tables, charts etc.) so that you lead by example
- Be explicit about citation expectations for each assessment
- Show students how to credit academic sources, and not assume they already know how
- Proactively refer students to [additional campus resources](#) for support citing and integrative evidence

Cheating: *“Trying to gain/give an improper advantage in an academic evaluation.”*

For example, the use or intent to use an unauthorized aid or accessing exams/solutions without permission.

A student might cheat if they are stressed out, are feeling unprepared to take a test or are struggling with the course content. To avoid instances of cheating:

- Encourage students to talk to you in advance of the deadline if they are struggling with the course content or are feeling overwhelmed
- Refer students to [stress and time management resources](#) on campus
- Encourage students to use the [Assignment Planner](#), which breaks down research and writing projects into manageable steps based on due dates
- Review tips in the CTE Resource [Supporting Students’ Mental Wellbeing: Instructional Strategies](#)

Intellectual Property Copyright (IP) Violations: *“The possession or use of another person’s intellectual property without that person’s permission or knowledge.”*

For example posting course materials online without permission, or using UW course materials in a third-party setting without permission.

A student might commit an IP Copyright violation for money, to help other students or for access to course notes in note-sharing platforms. They also may simply be not be aware of [the University’s guidelines on posting materials online or using them in a third party-setting](#) or [Policy 73 Intellectual Property Rights](#).

- Inform the instructor of any IP copyright violations (e.g., materials in an online note-sharing platform)
- Be explicit with students when material is not to be shared with others or online

Resources and Contact Information

If you have questions about academic integrity in a course, ask the instructor. The Office of Academic Integrity also has a wealth of resources [for students](#) and [instructors and teaching assistants](#) on the following:

- Group work
- IP and Copyright
- Referencing and research skills
- Turnitin and iThenticate
- Academic misconduct
- Policy 71 and other integrity-related policies

Contact the Office of Academic Integrity:

academic.integrity@uwaterloo.ca