

Academic Ethics for Undergraduates

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS, PROFESSORS, AND THE COMMUNITY

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UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ETHICS BOARD
KRIEGER SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
WHITING SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

***F**ounded in 1876, Johns Hopkins was the first research university in the United States. Its mission was to advance human knowledge through discovery and scholarship, and to pass that knowledge on to its students. The university's emphasis on both research and learning—and on how each area complements the other—revolutionized American higher education.*

This fusion of research and learning has become a hallmark of study at Johns Hopkins. As a result, the Hopkins community has a reputation for academic excellence, new discovery, and independent thought. The strength of this community lies fundamentally in the distinguished academic integrity of the university. A commitment to the principles of truth and honesty is essential to the goals of the university. Only through truth and honesty can the authorship, freedom, and collaboration that characterize and strengthen the university continue to thrive.

It is the personal responsibility of all members on the Homewood campus—students, faculty, and staff—to uphold the ethical standards of the institution.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

Students come to Johns Hopkins not only to improve their minds and to gain knowledge and skills, but also to build character and independence. The goal of Hopkins is to teach you to be both innovative and truthful, both insightful and respectful. To be a part of the community, you must be honest with others in every aspect of your lives.

Without honesty and ethics—which are central to a culture of trust—collaboration cannot exist and is replaced with unfair, suspicious competition. We all can celebrate the rigor of a Hopkins education, but that rigor loses its meaning if students cheat. This is why the university will not tolerate cheating.

Just as cheating hurts our community, it will hurt you. The university will punish violators with transcript notations, failure in a course, suspension and/or expulsion. The Pre-Professional Office will report a student's ethical violations, no matter how minor, to medical, law, and other professional schools. Federal government agencies will not give security clearance to anyone with ethics violations. And just as important, cheaters will suffer from the guilt and low self-esteem of earning a degree they do not deserve.

Undergraduates are expected to understand the ethical standards of the university, holding the highest standard of integrity for their own work and avoiding academic dishonesty in all forms. Ignorance of ethical rules is no excuse for cheating.

It is the further responsibility of every student to report to professors or deans any suspected violations of academic ethics by their peers. Enforcement of our code of ethics is a shared responsibility and should not depend on the university alone.

NOTE TO FACULTY

For the benefit of academic integrity at Hopkins, faculty must treat ethics as a serious matter. You should stress the importance of honesty and trust on the first day of your classes, as well as in your syllabi. Be certain your TAs understand that they must be as fair, consistent, and vigilant as you are.

Faculty members are responsible for clearly specifying the basic rules and procedures for all course work, examinations, or other academic exercises. Failure to do so creates confusion and unnecessary temptation among students.

In the “Resources” section of this guide, you will find a syllabus insert that reaffirms the university's stance on academic ethics and gives space for you to include unique information for your particular courses. For example, you can explain your policy regarding collaboration on assignments.

Faculty and teaching assistants must enforce violations of academic ethics equally and consistently. You should report all pending or resolved violations, no matter how minor, to the associate dean of student affairs (410-516-8208). Such enforcement

contributes to the seriousness of ethics at Hopkins, and it allows the fairest environment for all students.

You are responsible for exercising a reasonable degree of caution while writing, transporting, and administering examinations and other graded work.

An instructor should not tempt students to cheat by reusing exams or assignments unless these materials are accessible to all students. **You should submit all exams to the MSE Library to be placed on reserve.** See your department administrator for details.

Students should sign an ethics pledge attached to every exam. That pledge should read: *I have read and understood the guidebook, Academic Ethics for Undergraduates. I agree to complete this exam without unauthorized assistance from any person, materials, or device. [Signed and dated]* Until this pledge is printed on blue books, we ask that instructors write this text on a board or test sheet to be copied onto the written exam.

Your system for accepting and returning assignments outside of class must be secure (e.g., requires a sign-in sheet with times and signatures and prevents students' assignments from being removed).

NOTE TO PARENTS

A college education at Johns Hopkins is a wonderful privilege. Your son or daughter is grateful to

you for your support. You should be very proud of them.

At the same time, it is important to remember that the education they are receiving is rigorous. Your son or daughter may be facing academic demands, challenges, and competition that exceed their experiences. For the first time, he or she may not be at the top of the class.

We ask that you, as parents, support and encourage your son or daughter to succeed without placing excessive pressure upon them. The primary reason for cheating at Hopkins is panic and irrational thought when facing potential failure. This panic frequently stems from fear of not meeting parental expectation.

It is essential that you remind your son or daughter always to try their best and to be happy with this effort, regardless of the outcome. It may be necessary for them to seek extra help or tutoring, but you need to reassure them that they should not feel ashamed for doing so.

It is difficult for people outside the Hopkins community to understand how challenging the school can be. We encourage you to be a part of the community and to support your son or daughter in positive ways during their college years.

A Hopkins education will be a source of pride and satisfaction forever. Help your son or daughter experience this by encouraging them to act with integrity and honesty.



WHAT IS ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT?

Academic misconduct is the act of stealing ideas, thoughts, and words. Any act that violates the spirit of authorship or gives undue advantage is a violation. Although no list can be entirely comprehensive, the following non-exclusive examples are the most common types of cheating:

CHEATING ON EXAMINATIONS

- Use of unauthorized materials (e.g., notes, books) during an in-class or take-home examination
- Consultation of unauthorized materials while being excused (e.g., on a restroom break) from an examination room
- Discussion of an exam's contents during its administration
- Copying answers from another student
- Obtaining an examination or answers to an examination prior to its administration
- Studying from an old exam whose circulation was prohibited by the instructor

PLAGIARISM

- Submission of the same or substantially similar work of another person, such as an author or classmate
- Use of the results of another student's work (e.g., exam, homework, computer code, lab report) while representing it as your own
- Improper documentation of quotations, words, ideas, or paraphrased passages taken from published or unpublished sources

REUSE OF ASSIGNMENTS

- Submission of the same or substantially similar assignment to fulfill the requirements of more than one course

IMPROPER USE OF THE INTERNET

- Plagiarism from a published or unpublished Internet source
- Improper documentation of an Internet source
- Use of paper writing services or paper databases on the Internet

IMPROPER USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

- Consultation of unauthorized electronic devices (e.g., calculators, cellular phones, computers, PDAs) during examinations
- Use of electronic devices to communicate within or outside an examination room (i.e., use of cellular phones is not permitted during an exam)
- Storage of test answers, class notes, and other references in electronic devices for use during examinations

UNAUTHORIZED COLLABORATION

- Collaboration when solving homework problems or writing lab reports, computer programs, or papers unless explicitly approved by the professor

ALTERATION OF GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

- Submission of an examination or assignment for a regrade after making changes to the original answers or text

FORGERY AND FALSIFICATION

- Falsification or invention of data in a laboratory experiment
- Citation of nonexistent sources or creation of false information in a written assignment

- Attributing to a source ideas or information that is not included in the source
- Forgery of university documents, such as letters and transcripts

LYING

- Request for special consideration from professors or university officials based upon false information or deception
- Fabrication of a medical or emergency excuse as a reason for needing an extension on an assignment or for missing an examination
- Claiming falsely to have completed and/or turned in an assignment
- Falsely reporting an ethics violation by another student

FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

- Intentionally or knowingly aiding another student to commit a violation of academic conduct
- Allowing another student to copy from one's examination paper during its administration
- Providing copies of course materials whose circulation was prohibited (such as exams or assignments) to students enrolled in or planning to take that course
- Taking an examination or completing an assignment for another, or permitting one to do so

UNFAIR COMPETITION

- Willfully damaging the academic efforts of other students
- Stealing another student's academic materials (e.g., books, notes, assignments)
- Denying another student needed resources, such as hiding library materials or stealing lab equipment

EXCEPTIONS

In some cases, exceptions to the above examples may apply. For example, some instructors assign problem sets or laboratory projects with the intention that students will work together or form study groups. In these cases, all collaborating partners should be noted on a submitted assignment.

Some instructors may accept assignments completed for another course. Students must secure written permission from the instructor to do so. Other instructors expect or encourage students to consult old exams and write new exams accordingly.

Instructors should be certain that access to these exams is universal by placing them on reserve at the MSE Library.

To know what constitutes cheating for a particular course, students must ask the professor of the course for clarification. The general policy should be set forth during the first class of each semester and should be explained in the course syllabus. Students are expected to ask for clarification of unexplained or ambiguous areas. Ignorance of policies is not a valid excuse for cheating.

In general, it is important to remember the distinction between copying and collaborating. It is cheating to copy another's work and turn it in as your own. Professors, however, often encourage students to compare solutions or class notes with each other, to analyze differences in outcomes, to discuss methods, and to ask for explanations. Cheating requires no engagement or understanding, while collaboration promotes interactive learning.



ETHICS PROCEDURES

REPORTING

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Allegations of academic misconduct are investigated and resolved in a standard procedure. Generally, professors initiate investigations, either by detecting cheating themselves or by receiving reports from teaching assistants, students, and/or university staff members.

Students who witness violations should report to professors but may consult beforehand with the associate dean of students or the chairman of the Ethics Board.

The dean of students may refer information from any source to the Ethics Board for investigation and resolution.

Both students and instructors should follow these procedures:

1. In the case of a suspected academic ethics violation, a professor should meet with the student or students involved in the incident to discuss the accusation.
2. If the professor believes a student is guilty after this meeting, he or she must notify the associate dean of students (410-516-8208).
3. The dean will determine if this is the student's first offense, a fact that will affect the resolution of the case.
4. If a student has a prior offense, the Ethics Board must resolve the case in a hearing (*see next section*).
5. If the student has no prior offenses:
 - The professor and student may reach a settlement directly. The professor can propose a sanction no more severe than failure in the course in which the incident occurred. (More severe sanctions may be appropriate but must be referred to the Ethics Board.) The course cannot be repeated to replace a failing grade given as sanction.
 - If a student accepts this settlement, the resolution must be recorded in writing, with the signatures of both the professor and the student. A copy of this document must be sent to the associate dean of students.
 - A settlement reporting form for professors can be found on the Ethics Board Web site: <http://ethics.jhu.edu>.
 - When a professor and student cannot reach a settlement, due to disagreements over a student's guilt or over potential

punishments, the case must be resolved in an Ethics Board hearing. Either the student or professor may request an Ethics Board hearing in this situation.

Students and professors must notify the associate dean of students of the need for a hearing. A hearing request form can be found on the Ethics Board Web site.

ETHICS BOARD HEARINGS

After receiving a request, the associate dean of students initiates an Ethics Board hearing with the chairman of the board.

The board's Web site has full details of the procedure for hearings in the constitution, which is the official source of all ethics policies. Here is a summary:

1. The hearing panel consists of two faculty members and three undergraduate student members of the Ethics Board.
2. The board appoints a hearing assistant for the accused student and for the initiating instructor. The assistants, selected from members of the Ethics Board, meet with their respective parties to prepare evidence, testimony, and questions for the hearing. Assistants will attend and may participate in the hearing.
3. All evidence for the hearing must be placed on file in the Office of the Dean of Students. Students and professors can submit evidence directly to the associate

dean of students or indirectly through their assistants or the chairman.

4. The Ethics Board hearing is an orderly discussion, not a legal proceeding. Legal representation is not permitted. The hearing proceeds in this manner:

- The party initiating the complaint will present an account of the events and produces evidence leading to the charge of academic misconduct.
- Witnesses will be called to testify. Hearing panel members, initiating parties, the accused students, and their respective assistants may ask questions.
- The accused student may refute the charges and may call witnesses.
- The initiating party and the accused student will be allowed to make a closing statement.
- At the conclusion of the hearing, all parties will withdraw, and the deliberations of the hearing board will be held in private.
- The accused student and the initiating party will be informed in writing of the decision of the hearing board as promptly as possible.

5. Any student found not guilty is exonerated of all charges.

6. Students found guilty face the following potential sanctions, among others:

- Failure on an assignment
- Lowering of a grade or failure in a course
- Notation on a student's transcript of an ethics violation
- Suspension or expulsion from the university.

Sanctions depend on the mitigating circumstances of each case.

7. In the case of students with prior offenses, the minimum sanction a hearing panel may impose is failure in a course with a notation on a student's transcript, which states that the grade resulted from a violation of academic ethics.

8. After the hearing, the associate dean of students implements the Ethics Board's decision.

9. Students may appeal decisions by the Ethics Board to the dean or associate dean of their school (Arts and Sciences, Engineering, or SPSBE) within 10 business days.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Being accused of an ethics violation is a stressful and uncomfortable process. Students can help themselves by being completely honest in their discussions with professors, deans, and Ethics Board members.

Repeated lying will be uncovered by the Ethics Board and will result in more severe punishments. The Ethics Board and the community hope that students will learn from their mistakes, a process that can only begin by admitting them.

Students should take advantage of the available resources:

- The associate dean of student affairs will provide advice about how to deal with accusations, including direct settlement with professors and preparation for an Ethics Board hearing.
- The Counseling Center can help with personal difficulties relating to the accusations.
- The Ethics Board chairman provides a confidential source of advice from another student's point of view. He or she is the primary contact person for accused students.

In advance of an Ethics Board hearing, a student receives written notification of the hearing date, time, and location from the chairman of the board. Students are required to attend the hearing as scheduled. Failure to do so results in immediate suspension from the university.

FACULTY RESPONSIBILITY

Faculty members should enforce violations of academic ethics equally and consistently. All suspicions of academic misconduct, no matter how minor, must be investigated.

As outlined in the procedures above, instructors must contact the associate dean of student affairs (410-516-8208) to discuss any potential accusations of academic misconduct. This is necessary to determine if an accused student has previous violations of ethics. In addition, instructors must submit all direct settlements and hearing requests to the associate dean of students.

If an Ethics Board hearing is necessary, it will be scheduled to fit the instructor's schedule.

Instructors are expected to compile evidence and to present their account of a case during an Ethics Board hearing. Hearing assistants are assigned to support this process and to remove the professor from an adversarial role during the hearing. Discussions and meetings with assistants in advance of the hearing will make the process easier on faculty members.

Faculty members are encouraged to contact the associate dean of student affairs or the chairman of the board to discuss concerns and questions about the hearing.



RESOURCES

CONTACT INFORMATION

Dorothy Sheppard
Associate Dean of Student Affairs
and Adviser to the Undergraduate
Academic Ethics Board
410-516-8208
dsheppard@jhu.edu

Chairman of the Ethics Board
ethics@jhu.edu

JHU Undergraduate Academic
Ethics Board Web site: **<http://ethics.jhu.edu>**. This Web site
contains current contact informa-
tion for Ethics Board members, an
updated copy of the Ethics Board
constitution, and forms for report-
ing violations of academic ethics.

GUIDES TO PROPER CITATION

One of the primary causes of inad-
vertent plagiarism is improper cita-
tion of sources. The following text-
books are available in the reference
section of the Milton S. Eisenhower
Library and provide a thorough
explanation of referencing guide-
lines.

American Psychological
Association. *Publication Manual of
the American Psychological Association*.
5th ed. Washington, D.C.:
American Psychological
Association, 2001.

*Eisenhower Library General Reference
and Science Reference; check catalog for
additional locations. BF76.7.P83
2001.*

The Chicago Manual of Style. 14th
ed. Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 1993.

*Eisenhower Library General Reference
and Hutzler Undergraduate Reading
Room. Z253.C572.*

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Style Manual
and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*.
2nd ed. New York: Modern
Language Association of America,
1998.

*Eisenhower Library General
Reference; check catalog for additional
locations. PN147.G444 1998.*

The following Web sites also con-
tain detailed information on citing
sources:

**[www.library.jhu.edu/rsd/useit/
cite/index.html](http://www.library.jhu.edu/rsd/useit/cite/index.html)**

**[www.duke.edu/web/
HonorCouncil/citation.htm](http://www.duke.edu/web/HonorCouncil/citation.htm)**

**[www.ifla.org/I/training/citation/
citing.htm](http://www.ifla.org/I/training/citation/citing.htm)**.

*This site contains particularly useful
information on citing Internet sources.*



SYLLABUS INSERT

Instructors need to be clear on the rules for their courses regarding collaboration on assignments and taking exams. This information should be discussed on the first day of class during each semester and explained in the course syllabus.

The following is the insert that should be copied into instructors' syllabi, reaffirming the university's dedication to academic ethics and giving instructors the opportunity to include specific guidelines for their courses:

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

[In addition, the specific ethics guidelines for this course are:

- (1) (Insert unique rules here, such as your policy regarding collaboration on assignments or use of old exams.)*
- (2) (etc.)]*

Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student affairs and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on "Academic Ethics for Undergraduates" and the Ethics Board Web site (<http://ethics.jbu.edu>) for more information.