Essential University of Toronto Policies for TAs

UPHOLDING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity (AI) underpins teaching and learning at U of T. Honesty and fairness are fundamental values shared by the entire University community. Intellectual honesty can only be achieved when students appropriately acknowledge sources of information and ideas, present independent work on assignments and examinations, and complete and submit group projects in accordance with the standards of their divisions.

I notice that part of a lab report has been submitted previously in the same course by another student. What should I do?

My students have trouble understanding plagiarism. How can I explain this concept to them?

I discover that a student is cheating during an exam. How do I intervene?

RELEVANT UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO POLICIES & OFFICES

- [Academic Integrity at the University of Toronto](#) – the main website
- University of Toronto's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#)
- [Key Contacts](#) for Academic Integrity across U of T
- [Academic Integrity – Office of the Dean](#), UTM
- [Office of Academic Integrity](#) at UTSC
- [Office of Student Academic Integrity](#), Faculty of Arts & Science

WHAT IS AN ACADEMIC OFFENCE?

Academic misconduct at the University of Toronto is defined by the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#). Generally, academic misconduct is any behaviour, intentional or otherwise, that gives a student unearned or unfair advantage in academic work over other students. **The Code identifies various offences:** altering, forging or falsifying documents other than academic records; possession or use of unauthorized aids; impersonation; plagiarism; submission of work for which credit has previously been obtained; submission of work containing purported statement(s) of fact or reference(s) to concocted sources; any other misconduct to obtain academic credit or advantage; assisting another student in committing an offence.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

➲ **What if a student didn't know they were cheating?** A student may be sanctioned for having committed an offence not only if they have intentionally committed it, but also if he/she ought to have known that they were committing an offence. Ignorance of the rules does not excuse cheating.

➲ **What if a student helped someone else cheat?** They have committed an offence if they helped someone else commit one. As a party to an offence, they could face the same penalties as the student suspected of cheating.

➲ **Do I have to report all academic offences?** YES. It is your responsibility to determine whether or not there is sufficient evidence for a case to go forward.

➲ **Can a CI ask me to resolve academic offences?** NO. TAs do not have authority to make any decisions regarding the work in question. If a TA suspects plagiarism or other academic offences it is their responsibility to inform the CI before returning any work to the student. The TA should refer the student to the CI if he/she has any questions.

➲ **Can a CI ask me to investigate a case?** YES, provided hours are allocated within the TA contract to perform

these duties. These duties might include confirming evidence of plagiarism or writing a report about behaviour witnessed at a test or exam. The CI may also ask their TA to assist with the interview with the student.

➲ **Who is responsible for imposing sanctions on students who have committed academic offences?** TAs and CI are not empowered to impose sanctions. If the CI feels that an offence has occurred, they are required to report it to their Chair or Dean who may impose a sanction.
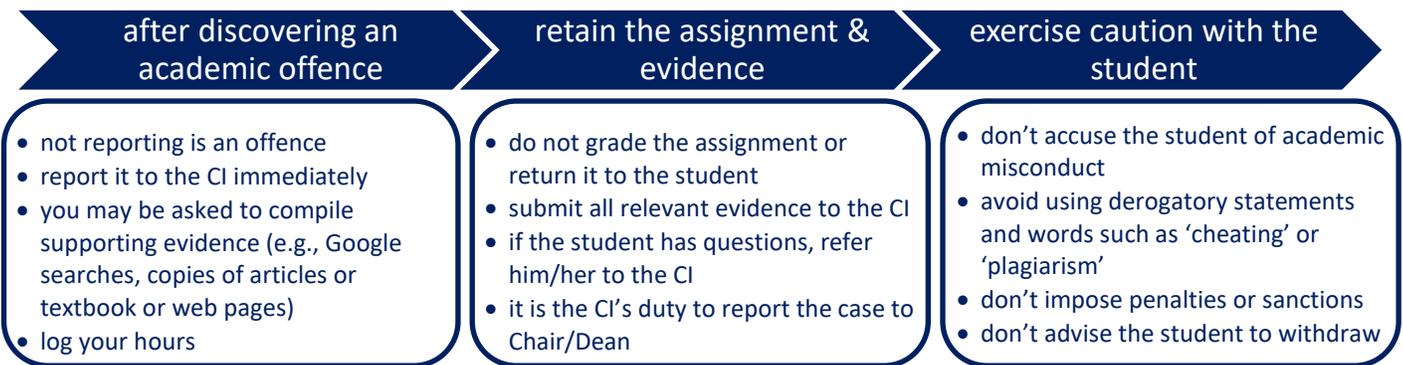
➲ **What if a student asks me not to report an offence?** TAs should never enter into bargaining. It is normal for students to be stressed when they realize they have been reported for an offence. Tell the student that you are simply following protocol. Do not make any guesses as to what the sanction will be. Advise the student to make an appointment with their registrar or faculty advisor, who can inform them about the process and their rights.

➲**What if I catch a student cheating during an exam?** Speak immediately to the CI or the exam Chief Presiding Officer (CPO) to corroborate the offence. Submit a report of the offence to the CI.

DETECTING ACADEMIC OFFENCES

● be aware and vigilant ● look for unusual things ● check students' evidence and sources ● evaluate students on the entire writing process by evaluating supporting work such as outlines and drafts ●

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ACADEMIC OFFENCES

after discovering an academic offence	retain the assignment & evidence	exercise caution with the student
• not reporting is an offence • report it to the CI immediately • you may be asked to compile supporting evidence (e.g., Google searches, copies of articles or textbook or web pages) • log your hours	• do not grade the assignment or return it to the student • submit all relevant evidence to the CI • if the student has questions, refer him/her to the CI • it is the CI's duty to report the case to Chair/Dean	• don't accuse the student of academic misconduct • avoid using derogatory statements and words such as 'cheating' or 'plagiarism' • don't impose penalties or sanctions • don't advise the student to withdraw

---

ENCOURAGING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN YOUR TUTORIAL: PREVENTING ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Discuss academic integrity in your tutorial and explain why academic offences are serious. Do not assume that students know how to recognize academic offences in their own work. Frame this conversation not around sanctions and punishments but rather around building a positive culture of academic integrity.

- **Make your expectations clear**. Be explicit about what is and is not allowed in your tutorial and include this in your tutorial syllabus.
- **Devote part of your first tutorial to discussing why AI is important** to you and should be to students.
- Remind your students of some of the lesser-known academic offences. **Explore offences you feel are a risk**, or that students may not be prepared for, such as sharing work with friends, or re-submission of work.
- **Build a community of learners** in your tutorials (e.g., by learning all your students' names) and show students that you care about their success and help them help themselves.
- Talk to students about AI before they submit their assignments.
- Direct students to various resources: writing centres; teaching and learning services; academic skills centres; health and wellness; accessibility services; instructional videos on AI; academic integrity quiz; resources for international students; college-specific resources; etc.
- Use **plagiarism detection software** like TurnItIn.com (consult with the Course Instructor before integrating such tools into your tutorials).