



Encouraging Academic Honesty in Student Work

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This paper presents techniques for teaching students to recognize and avoid plagiarism. Though some students are deliberately deceitful and/or lazy, most students want to do the right thing but may need instruction and encouragement to do so. Many simply lack the knowledge or preparation needed to recognize and avoid plagiarism. Moreover, faculty members often provide insufficient direction and often either fail to take steps to recognize plagiarism or to hold students accountable for plagiarism when it is evident. No matter what the reason for the problem, the instructor has a responsibility to encourage academic honesty in student work.

Literature Review

Once a side note in university honor codes, plagiarism has increasingly become a major issue in the academic careers of not only students but also faculty (Davis, Grover, Becker and McGregor, 1992; Leming, 1978; McCabe, Treviño and Butterfield, 2001; Singhal, 1982). The role of technology and the availability of online resources has become almost too much of a temptation for students (Ashworth, Bannister, and Thorne, 1997; Campbell, Swift, and Denton, 2000). There is even a notion that if faculty members do not attempt to actively prevent cheating, then it must be acceptable (Heuchert, 2002). This is not isolated to the undergraduate classroom, but extends to graduate programs and scholarly journals (Levin and Marshall, 1993; Fly, van Bark, Weinman, Kitchener, and Lang, 1997). Cheating has moved beyond buying papers and “cut and paste” from electronic sources. One computer science faculty member

found a student outsourcing homework to the highest bidder on www.rentacoder.com (Ross, 2005).

The prevention of electronic plagiarism has been recommended over electronic verification as time constraints on faculty members make it difficult to check every assignment (McLafferty and Foust, 2004). However, research indicates that using an online detection tool substantially reduces the prevalence of “cut and paste” style cheating (Martin, 2005). The following recommendations are a combination of prevention, deterrence, and detection that, together, make an excellent tool kit of resources to address plagiarism in higher education.

Recommendation 1: Give students a policy on academic honesty that includes a clear definition of plagiarism and associated penalties.

Some students may not understand what constitutes plagiarism. They may be simply careless about crafting and presenting their own thoughts in research papers and similar assignments that require them to synthesize and critically analyze the published works of others. They simply cobble together the words and phrases they find in convenient print or web-based sources. Bilveer Singh refers to this as “A and A,” or “alteration and amendment” (Hastings, 2003).

Others are desensitized to the ethics of plagiarism. After taking this approach too often and observing others do the same with no serious consequences, a student may become desensitized to violations of his or her personal code of ethical conduct. Similar reasoning and desensitization permeates attitudes related to the ethics of file-swapping pirated songs and videos.

Discussing the seriousness and consequences of plagiarism at the beginning of the semester serves as a reminder and an explicit notice to students. A stated policy also raises their awareness regarding proper attribution of sources and provides clear justification in the event that the instructor imposes penalties for an infraction later in the term.

Unfortunately, reminding students alone is not enough. Instructors must enforce their syllabi and follow through with consequences when clear policy violations occur. Otherwise, the policy becomes just another paragraph in a document that students already have a tendency to selectively read. Cochran recently noted (2005) that when a student was caught with clear evidence of file copying (clearly defined as cheating in the course syllabus), “deny, deny, deny”

became the student's response. The student elected to appeal the imposed penalty (grade of F in the course) through two levels of the process until it was evident that reversing the penalty would have no impact on their academic standing. In this case, suspension was inevitable due to final grades in other courses. For this student, it was not a situation where they did or did not cheat; it was about what the penalty would cost the student. For the student, "cost of penalty" appears to serve as a moderator worthy of future investigation.

Appendix A contains some sample passages from syllabi that can be used to accomplish this task. Referencing the student handbook or catalog reminds students about institutional policies. Include enough flexibility in the penalty section to be able to justify correcting student work on drafts or intermediate versions of assignments, where appropriate, rather than having to impose the most severe penalty in each and every incident. This allows an educational approach rather than forcing a punitive approach in dealing with the problem.

Recommendation 2: Construct assignments that limit the opportunity for plagiarism.

Students face significant conflict and pressure from the overwhelming demands of life, work, and a full course load. They may feel they have no other recourse than to accept a tactic that cuts corners to complete what they view as unreasonable projects that have no relevance beyond the completion of a course requirement. Moreover, faculty members are role models for students, and when a student observes a faculty member use the same assignments semester after semester and/or provide standard assignments that do not require the student to exert creative thought, the student may be reasonably expected to take steps to reduce their workload as well.

In this context, faculty can create unique assignments or unique twists on classic assignments, making more difficult for a student to simply buy or copy a paper on a standard topic from the Internet. To be blunt, faculty members have an obligation to develop assignments that make plagiarism less likely. Beyond that, faculty members have a responsibility to serve as a role model for students. If you are taking the easy way out, why shouldn't they?

Here are some examples for research paper assignments:

- Give unique topics each semester.
- Apply a topic in a specific way. Example topics might be the impact of recent developments, such as the effect of the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation on Management Information Systems.

- Require the student to address specific questions or issues relevant to the topic. For example, in a statistics course the instructor could have the students write a research proposal for comparing prices at two grocery stores. One of the authors uses this approach and actually gives them a list of 10-20 research questions. Students write proposals for several potential projects.
- Ask the student how a particular topic applies to their current job or to the University. An example would be a management topic essay such as “Many students and/or organizational employees experience apathy. Using theories of reinforcement and motivation, explain why this apathy occurs and what can be done about it.”
- Ask the student to conduct an interview at a local business or non-profit organization about the topic to incorporate into the paper.
- Ask the student to collect data on the topic using an experiment, local observation, interview, or web-survey technique. For example, have them execute a research study. See the appendix for examples.
- Limit the student to a list of approved sources. Dr. Donna White, an Assistant Professor of English at Arkansas Tech University, required students to write papers on the topic of plagiarism itself from a list of sources previously evaluated.

Recommendation 3: Create an assignment that matches the student’s assignment with ideas or activities in which they have a personal stake.

If a student views an assignment as unimportant and/or irrelevant, it may make sense, from the student’s perspective, to put forth minimal effort. Drogemuller (1997) suggests avoiding ambiguity in assignments and instead using specific, detailed instructions and tasks that engage the student’s interest. Where possible, craft assignments that encourage a student to investigate an issue about which the student is passionate or is of service to an organization to which the student belongs. This approach also creates unique content for the assignment.

Here are some examples for activity-based learning.

- Create a web page, database, spreadsheet, or project plan for a business, student club, or non-profit organization.
- Write journal entries or web logs about field trips, group interactions, or reflections on guest speakers. Have the student develop these entries into a reflective narrative or position paper.
- Write a paper on developing the student's own management, leadership, or learning style.

Such assignments are more relevant to students and give them opportunities to apply course topics in a practical way.

Recommendation 4: Inspect student's work in intermediate stages of completion.

Students may not truly understand what constitutes plagiarism. Moreover, students face numerous demands and may procrastinate (Who doesn't?). Require submission of an outline, a research strategy, an annotated bibliography, or a draft of a research paper. Peer review, supplemented by instructor review of randomly selected papers, further discourages plagiarism and provides an additional learning opportunity for students. Then, when the final assignment is submitted, require students to submit earlier drafts as well. If a student simply copies a finished project, he or she will either not be able to show the intermediate work or will have to put forth more effort to reverse engineer the intermediate work.

In announcing intermediate assignments, take advantage of the opportunity to remind students of the policy and to teach them how to document their sources as they begin their library and internet research. This technique also encourages students to get the project started earlier. If they wait until just before the due date, they will more likely be overwhelmed and therefore more tempted to cheat.

Intermediate assignments give the instructor the opportunity to demonstrate examples of unacceptable referencing and feedback on citation style while there is still time to correct the work. Apply penalties as appropriate. Students tend to pay attention to a low grade on an assignment. The student grapevine will spread the word that academic honesty is enforced in the class, which will encourage future students to try harder to properly document their sources to ensure passing the course and getting a desired grade.

Recommendation 5: Use web-based and library-database search engines to check student work.

When students submit assignments electronically, technology can be used to identify instances of plagiarism. Use more than one search engine and use relevant keywords from the student's work. Popular search engines among students include MSN, Yahoo, and Google. Metasearch engines such as Dogpile and Metacrawler will search the search engines to speed up this process. This is one of the fastest ways to check for Internet plagiarism (Leland, 2002; Senechal, 2003).

This approach is fairly work-intensive. It may be more efficient to subscribe to and use a plagiarism detection service such as Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com), EVE2 Essay Verification Engine (www.canexus.com) and Glatt Plagiarism Services (www.plagiarism.com) (Martin, 2005; Smith, 2003).

Turnitin.com uses pattern recognition software to compare a student's paper to an internal database of papers previously submitted to the service (currently at over 10,000 items), material published on the Web, and articles in online databases such as ABI/Inform (Turnitin.com, 2005). While this service is not perfect, it does save time by finding and documenting sections of text that match previously published works.

Papers can be submitted to Turnitin.com by either the instructor or the student. Having the student submit the paper is not difficult, saves the instructor time, and further educates the student as to what constitutes plagiarism. To use the service, students create a personal account and then 'join' (enroll) in the class account before uploading the paper. Once the paper has been submitted, Turnitin.com analyzes the paper for text matching existing sources that are not properly documented and then posts an 'Originality Report'. The turn-around time for this part of the process generally takes less than 15 minutes. This report offers a score of 0-5 reflecting the percentage of copied material. It also underlines the flagged material in the student's paper and provides color-coded links to a source for that material. The instructor has the option of viewing the Originality Report confidentially or allowing the student to see the report also.

The instructor may permit the student to correct the paper and re-submit it for a second analysis. This feature allows the instructor to take an educational approach rather than a punitive approach on papers that have a relatively low percentage of copied material where a student has attempted to cite a source but has not done so correctly. The dramatic colored, underlined

material and links to original sources does get the student's attention. This approach also allows the instructor to compensate for the limitations of the plagiarism service.

There are some limitations to the Turnitin.com. Their analysis does not identify indirect use of ideas that have been paraphrased by the student. The instructor must evaluate the paper for this problem personally. The Originality Report occasionally flags common, frequently used phrases that are repeated in a number of articles. The analysis does not always handle simple citation syntax errors or different referencing formats very gracefully. For example, the student might essentially reference a source correctly but not place a comma between an author and a date in a parenthetical reference. Once in a while, Turnitin.com identifies a different original source from the one the student correctly cites. Reasons for this might include the use of secondary cites, self-references in the cited material, or apparent cases of failure to cite properly in the published material itself.

Royce (2003) reports on a trial of Turnitin.com by Robin Hill in which the service failed to detect plagiarized material. He also personally found that Turnitin.com missed text from Usenet group postings and online encyclopedias, although he concluded it was one of the better services available. He suggested use of such services as a "deterrent ... they have to be used wisely, with an awareness of their shortcomings" (Royce, 2003, 30).

Perhaps some students will always choose to bypass the learning process and to compromise their ethical standards. Perhaps instructors may not always be able to identify plagiarism when this happens. The spirit behind these recommendations operates on the belief that students want to do the right thing but may need instruction and support to do so. This paper has recommended several techniques for minimizing this behavior. The instructor can give students warning and notice, show them how to properly reference and cite sources, create assignments that make plagiarism more difficult, collect and grade intermediate work, and use a plagiarism detection service. Using these approaches, faculty can encourage academic honesty in student work.

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Appendix

Sample Syllabi Passages

Sample Assignments

Academic Honesty

Apply the principle of Academic Honesty in all activities in this course. Strive for the highest professional and ethical standards. All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be your own work.

Do not plagiarize, cheat, or get excessive help from someone else in completing your work. Otherwise, you will compromise your own integrity, bypass the learning process, and cheat yourself of the full value of this course.

Unless explicitly indicated otherwise, use of any software, cell phones, or calculators during a quiz or exam (other than test administration software) is not permitted. Any such use will result in a zero for that assessment and may result in additional penalties. Examples of such software applications include instant messaging, e-mail, additional session of a web browser, and any Office suite application.

Academic dishonesty will be handled according to the policy of the University as stated in the Student and Faculty Handbooks. Plagiarism, cheating, or other types of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade on a test/quiz/assignment and may result in failing the course or in further disciplinary procedures and penalties as appropriate.

Please note that the professor is required to make a formal report to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs. This documentation will remain in your student file.

The term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; or (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University community.

The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

An example of plagiarism is using someone else's words and phrases without placing them in quotation marks and referencing the source. Another example of plagiarism is paraphrasing concepts and facts presented by someone else without indicating the source. (Paraphrased material does not require quotes but does require referencing the source to avoid plagiarism.)

Document everything in all class assignments (PowerPoint slides, proposal memos, paper drafts, etc.). In particular, state the source of all facts, figures, tables, and quotes. Unless you have first-hand experience or knowledge, you should indicate where you found a fact or concept. Upon request, any videotapes and demonstration materials must also be available to the professor for an extended examination.

I will be more than happy to help you avoid plagiarism or improve your writing style. Please do not hesitate to ask if you need any assistance in this area. Just try to be reasonable in asking for time in advance of assignment due dates.

Statistics Project Assignment

After mastering course concepts by passing Part One, students are ready to apply those

concepts. There are a variety of ways this can be accomplished. The list that follows suggests some of the ways the “application” requirement for this class can be met. If you have another idea that you would like to pursue, please submit and obtain approval for your proposal (one or two paragraphs) before you start. The number of “applications” that you complete successfully will affect your grade in the class. For more on that, please see the end of this portion of the syllabus.

1. Research Proposal Outlines

Using research questions and a format provided by the instructor (upon your request), outline five research study proposals designed to answer the assigned research questions. The study proposals should include a variety of parameters (at least four) and data collection methods (at least three).

2. Secondary Research Study

Obtain, organize, and use existing (secondary) data to answer a research question. You may either use a research question provided by the instructor or you may use an instructor-approved research question that you develop. The paper must be written and formatted using the research paper format posted on the course website.

3. Direct Observation Research Study

Obtain, organize, and use data gathered via direct observation to answer a research question. You may either use a research question provided by the instructor or you may use an instructor-approved research question that you develop. The paper must be written and formatted using the research paper format posted on the course website.

4. Survey Research Study

Obtain, organize, and use data gathered using a survey to answer a research question. You may either use a research question provided by the instructor or you may use an instructor-approved research question that you develop. The paper must be written and formatted using the research paper format posted on the course website. If you elect to do two survey research studies, at least one of the studies must use a previously validated measurement scale (Meet with me to discuss possibilities.).

5. Experimental Research Study

Obtain, organize, and use data gathered by conducting an experiment to answer a research question. You may either use a research question provided by the instructor or

you may use an instructor-approved research question that you develop. The paper must be written and formatted using the research paper format posted on the course website. If your experiment involves human subjects, you must also obtain approval from the University's "Human Subjects Committee." See http://research.atu.edu/human_subjects.htm.

6. Develop a website that addresses a major course concept (e.g., testing hypothesis involving two independent means)

Though the website should include links to other websites, the website must have "added value" in order to receive a passing grade. Examples of ways to add value could include:

- developing and solving problems based on real data sets (perhaps a data set you developed for one of the other course "applications.")
- developing a spreadsheet or graphic that illustrates the concept

7. Article Critique

Using the "Guidelines for Critiquing and Article" provided by the instructor, critique two articles provided or approved by the instructor.

MIS Research Paper Assignment

Due dates will be listed in the Course Schedule. This assignment is worth 250 points.

Information Technology and MIS managerial practices are constantly changing and evolving. Even as this class proceeds, innovations are making the use of IT faster, better, and more effective. However, IT innovations are often very costly and are not always successful. Therefore, it is necessary to be able to research IT and IT management topics quickly and efficiently in order to keep up with these changes.

The purpose of this assignment is to learn how to investigate and evaluate new IT and the best managerial practices and to understand their potential effects on business organizations.

ASSIGNMENT ACTIVITIES

Paper Topic Approval (-15 points for not completing on time)

Paper Research Strategy Memo (15 pts)

Annotated Bibliography (articles from approved sources; 40 pts)

Paper Draft (40 pts)

Paper Draft Peer Review (40 pts)

Papers submitted to Turnitin.com (15 pts)

Final version of Paper (100 pts)

Select, research, and evaluate an information technology issues topic for business use. I must approve your topic and topics are allotted on a first-come, first-serve basis. You will find a list of suggested topics below. To confirm approval of topics, I will add names of the students for each topic and post each list to the group area of Blackboard for each section. You may ask for a topic in class or in an e-mail. In-class requests have priority over email requests.

Prepare a 10-page report on the topic. The 10-page length does not include the title page, abstract page, list of references, or any appendices. Focus on answering the following questions, depending on the nature of the topic. Technical topics should be handled differently from managerial topics.

1. What are the main managerial issues involved?
2. What is the current state of the technology or managerial practice? How are companies using it?
3. Why would a company or a manager want to adopt a particular technology or managerial practice in this area? Why would a company choose not to adopt or use it?
4. Who are the vendors? In general, what does it cost to purchase and implement the technology?
5. How does the technology or managerial practice affect people, groups, organizations, and societies?
6. Are there any pointers on how to successfully implement this technology or managerial practice?

Present a balanced point of view. Do not make a sales pitch for a particular software package, Internet site, or company. Do not use company propaganda as a main source of information. Do not base your paper only on personal knowledge/experience. Report on what you find in the popular/research literature on the topic.

Emphasize managerial aspects rather than technical aspects (Why is this important in an organizational setting? Why adopt the technology or approach? Why not? How can you make it succeed? Where are the pitfalls?)

Use the textbook, the library, the Internet, and companies as resources. Use high quality web sources with widely accepted credentials.

See Writing Tips in the External Links area of Blackboard for guidelines on general formatting, grammar, and writing style

The grade will be determined by quality of content, writing style, and citation of sources. I determine quality of content by accuracy, managerial focus, comprehensiveness or depth, logical flow, use of pertinent and timely examples, and proper use of parenthetical references and citation of sources. I determine quality of writing style by use of standard business English, spelling, grammar, cohesive paragraphs, logical flow, avoidance of passive voice, and avoidance of first or second person voice. Review the "Top Ten Egregious Grammar Errors," which is in Writing Tips.

With respect to citation of sources, review the Academic Honesty section of the Syllabus/Policies area. Document sources carefully as you conduct your research. In particular, note the source of all facts, figures, tables, and quotes. Note the page numbers or sections and paragraphs where you found the material. See the Writing Tips documents for ways to avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism is copying directly without quotes and referencing the source. Paraphrasing from a source is acceptable. This approach does not require quotation marks but does require a parenthetical reference to avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the project or other penalties. Anything longer than one sentence of a direct quote not referenced will result in a zero on the final paper itself (a loss of 100 points) and may result in further penalties, depending on the severity of the plagiarism and at my discretion.

Failure to reference indirect quotes will result in a loss of 10 points per incident at my discretion. Indirect quotes involves re-writing someone else's ideas or facts in your own words. Turnitin.com does not flag this sort of plagiarism. I have given a grade of 10-30 points out of 100 on a final paper for this reason.

The paper should have parenthetical (in-text) references and a list of sources at the end (a bibliography) rather than footnotes and endnotes. References and citation of sources, including electronic sources, must follow the APA style. You can find examples in Writing Tips and at the ATU Library web site.

Topics are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. We may complete topic assignment during class (in-class requests have priority over e-mail requests sent during the same class). Outside of class, you may send me an e-mail to document your request for a particular topic.

Below is a list of general topics areas. You may need to focus your topic more narrowly. If you are interested in a topic not on this list, feel free to propose one.

I'll confirm paper topic choices in the Group area Discussion Board for each section.

Turnitin.com Assignment

The due date is listed on the Course Schedule. This assignment is worth 15 points. Submit your MIS Paper to www.turnitin.com. This site will evaluate your paper for the degree of originality (a polite way of saying how well you avoided plagiarism).

You will need:

- * A personal account id and password
- * A class account id and password

1) Go to www.turnitin.com. Create your own personal account. (Click the little 'Create a user profile' link just beneath the 'user login' button in the upper-right corner of the screen. Then just follow the instructions.)

DO NOT USE THE TRIAL ACCOUNT. IF YOU DO, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO JOIN OUR CLASS, AND I WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR REPORT.

Keep in mind that this system is ***CASE SENSITIVE***, so remember your ID and password exactly as you enter it. You must enter a valid, active e-mail address when creating this account.

I am not an administrator at this web site, so I will not be able to help if you forget your id or password.

NOTE: If you created an account here during some other course, you do not have to create a new one. Use your existing account.

2) 'Join' our class, using the following Class ID and Password

Class ID: to be announced

Class Password: to be announced

(Remember, it's case sensitive.)

3) To submit your paper to the "Paper: First Submission" assignment, click on the icon under the Submit column.

4) Check back at this site later for the Originality Report, which is usually posted within an hour or two (sometimes longer, up to a day or so later, if they are having problems). The report will be listed beside your paper.

5) If you need to make corrections, you may re-submit the revised paper to the "Revised Paper" assignment.

Let me know if you have any questions or problems.

Final Version of Paper

This assignment is worth 100 points. The paper should be 10 pages of text plus a title sheet, an abstract, and a list of references. The due date is listed in the Course Schedule.

Correct any problems flagged by Turnitin.com before submitting the final version of your paper, with the exception of a few situations I will explain in class.

Let me remind you again. Plagiarism may result in a failing grade on the paper or other penalties, at my discretion. Anything flagged at Turnitin.com (with a few exceptions) but not corrected will result in a zero on the final paper itself (a loss of 100 points) and may result in further penalties, depending on the severity of the plagiarism and at my discretion.

Failure to reference indirect quotes will result in a loss of 10 points per incident at my discretion. Indirect quotes involve re-writing someone else's ideas or facts in your own words. Turnitin.com does not flag this sort of plagiarism. I have given a grade of 10-30 points out of 100 on final papers for this reason.

Submit a softcopy to the Blackboard Assignments area by the start of class on the due date. The filename should follow this format: KimTroboyMISFinalPaper.doc (substituting your name).