

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
Policy on Academic Cheating and Plagiarism for Students

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(Adapted from SFSU Department of Physics and Astronomy Policy on Academic Cheating and Plagiarism, the San Jose State University Senate Policy S07-2 and Nancy Gerber)

Academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is behavior that can result in disciplinary sanctions (SFSU Bulletin, student conduct section). This document defines what the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry considers to be cheating or plagiarism, and specifies what action will be taken if cheating or plagiarism occurs.

Academic Cheating: Cheating is defined as using materials to obtain help in completing an assignment, report, quiz or exam that are not available to the entire class. Examples of materials include instructor manuals, solutions for exams from previous semesters, lab reports or homework assignments from other students, notes or textbooks used for closed book exams, accessing ilearn or material download from ilearn (or other course website) during an exam or quiz, and looking at someone else's work during an exam or quiz. Only materials provided to the class by the instructor, or materials the instructor explicitly gives the class permission to use, are allowed.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is "the act of representing the work of another as one's own without giving appropriate credit, regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements" (SJSU Senate Policy S07-2). Examples of plagiarism include copying text, data, figures or graphs from any source without citing the source of the work, or adapting text, data, figures or graphs from any source without crediting the original source of the adapted work.

Requirement on Originality of Student Work: Unless explicitly told to turn in one report or assignment for a group, any work submitted by students must be their own work. Any work incorporated from another source must be clearly identified as such by an appropriate reference. It is never acceptable, however, for students to copy any part of a report, assignment or exam from another student's work even if properly referenced.

Guidelines for Determining if Cheating or Plagiarism Has Occurred: The instructor may suspect students of copying each others' work if the work submitted by two or more students is highly similar or identical either in content or presentation of information.

Students may be suspected of plagiarism if information is provided that is beyond the scope of the assignment or data assumed to be used, or if the writing style changes. Turnitin is being used in some courses to check the similarity of reports and assignments turned in by students to past and current student work and to sources of information on the web or provided by the instructor.

The instructor may suspect a student of cheating, whether on a homework assignment or an examination, if the student cannot explain both the details of his or her solution and the techniques and principles used to generate that solution.

Procedure for Suspected Academic Cheating or Plagiarism Cases: The instructor will discuss violations of this policy with the student(s) and then will inform the student(s) in writing of the charge and state the evidence. A copy will go to the Department Chair and a record will be kept in the Chemistry and Biochemistry department office. The student must meet with the Department Chair to discuss the violation.

Penalty for Academic Cheating or Plagiarism: In cases of academic cheating or plagiarism, no credit will be given for the assignment in question to all students involved in the incident, regardless of who instigated the cheating incident. If a second or further incident is reported for an individual, whether that be in the same class or in a different class, or if the circumstances of a first incident is sufficiently serious, a letter describing the incident(s) will be forwarded to the Student Discipline Officer for possible disciplinary action, which may include expulsion, suspension, or probation; as well as lesser sanctions. Please refer to the Supplemental Regulations and Procedures section of the SFSU Bulletin for details.

Examples of Academic Cheating (not a comprehensive list)

- When a student copies the work of another student, either entirely or in part, and turns in that work as his or her own.
- When a student knowingly permits another student to copy from his or her work.
- When a student turns in equations, explanations, diagrams, tables, graphs, figures, drawings or computer code obtained from the work of another student.
- When a student deliberately transforms borrowed sections of someone else's work in order to disguise their origin.
- When several students collaborate on a project and fail to inform the instructor of this.
- When a student uses homework solutions or lab reports or other assignments from a previous semester to complete assignments in a class or lab.
- When a student uses the internet or other services to post assignments to obtain answers to homework or laboratory questions.
- When a student accesses course materials on a course website, or downloads course materials to an electronic device and accesses those materials during an exam or quiz.

Examples of Plagiarism (not a comprehensive list)

- When a student uses content from other sources to complete his/her work or projects without proper attribution.
- When Internet or other resources are used verbatim and/or "cut and pasted" into students work regardless of whether they are acknowledged or not.

Cheating and Plagiarism have not occurred in these circumstances:

- When students have permission to collaborate on a project, and all collaborators are listed on the submitted work.
- When students receive advice from instructors or teaching assistants involved in the course, or from tutors for the course.
- When students engage in a general discussion of the nature of an assignment, the requirements for an assignment, or general implementation strategies for an assignment.
- When students engage in discussion of course concepts or solution strategies to prepare for an assignment or examination (but not for take home exams).
- When students share knowledge about solution strategies, or compare independent solutions to problems on homework or lab reports (but not for take home exams).
- When students use primary literature, books or allowable internet resources for an assignment if the source is properly attributed.