*Academic Integrity in the Classroom*

* What are baseline standards for collaborations?

Each professor has specific rules regarding his or her own interpretation and enforcement regarding collaboration. It is important to always consult with your professor before collaborating on any type of work.

With that in mind, the very basic understanding that all students should have is that any submitted work must be original. Even in collaborating with someone, an effort should be made for each person to produce unique work. More specifically, without additional guidelines from a professor, a student’s help is acceptable if the one providing aid does not directly influence answers or submissions. A student should attempt to help another student understand concepts and directions, but not how to specifically solve a problem or answer a question.

* Are Academic Archives permitted?

If an academic archive (collections of old exams, problems sets, essays, etc.) contains copyrighted or any proprietary material, or is explicitly forbidden in the class syllabus, its use is not permitted.

Unless specified otherwise by your professor, academic archives do not violate student conduct policy. It is always important to discuss with your professor the use of an academic archives prior to said use.

* What is TurnItIn? How is it used? What is produced in a similarity report?

Turnitin is website database used to compare students’ submitted work with a variety of other academic papers and submissions that helps to ensure originality in a student’s work.

Professors and TAs use this tool to determine the originality of a submitted paper. This “originality” is displayed as a percentage of the overall paper. A low percentage indicates few to no similarities in phrases found in other literature.

* To what degree can I help a friend on homework? Even if we don’t just give out answers, is helping someone permitted?

Of course, this issue will differ from class to class but, in general, it is a good rule of thumb to always ask your professor for clarification on any given assignment if there is ever any doubt.  Just remember there is a difference between collaboration (working together to build your understanding) and plagiarism (copying others work) and, again, this will be class dependent.

* Is self-plagiarism any different from plagiarism? Is there a separate penalty?

Self-plagiarism is addressed as an issue of “Multiple Submissions” in the Code of Academic Integrity. It is defined as, “submitting, without prior permission, any work submitted to fulfill another academic requirement.”

While it may appear that using one’s own work should not be a violation of Penn’s Code of Integrity, it nevertheless can result in punishment if the student does not get prior approval.

* What constitutes plagiarism?

The Code of Academic Integrity defines plagiarism as, “using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgment.” Examples of such a violation include: “copying another person’s paper, article, or computer work and submitting it for an assignment, cloning someone else’s ideas without attribution, failing to use quotation marks where appropriate”, among others.

* If I cite a source, can I still be accused of plagiarism? Can I get in trouble for a badly done reference?

Incorrect citations are often insufficient. If a professor specifies a specific form of citation, then that form is required to avoid plagiarism.