

Academic Integrity

For a more **in-depth and interactive** discussion of academic integrity, [check out our online module](#).

One of the most important reasons to attend university is to continue **your own academic and personal growth**. Queen's University is "dedicated to learning, intellectual inquiry, the dissemination and advancement of knowledge, personal and professional development, and good citizenship" in its scholarly community (Queen's [Code of Conduct](#), p. 2). **Academic integrity is a key part of this dedication.**

In this resource, you'll find information about

- what "academic integrity" means
- why it matters
- what counts as academic dishonesty
- how SASS can help you maintain your academic integrity while you're at Queen's.

What is academic integrity?

Academic integrity means **the practice of honest and responsible scholarship**. It's a key part of everything we do at university.



Academic integrity is based on the "fundamental values of **honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage**," which are "central to the building, nurturing, and sustaining of an academic community" (see the [Centre for Academic Integrity](#)).

As you likely already know, it's **your responsibility** to practice academic integrity in all of your academic work. Departures from academic integrity can have some serious consequences. Practicing academic integrity is also critical to your identity as a student and a scholar.

However, **you don't have to master academic integrity skills on your own!** SASS can help you, whether you are an undergraduate or a graduate student, new to or familiar with academic integrity.

For more information on policies and procedures specific to your faculty or school, click [here](#).

Why do students cheat?

Many departures from academic integrity are committed when students:

- **are stressed** and **working at the last minute**
- **misunderstand the rules**
- **lack knowledge** about how to quote and paraphrase.

This and other SASS resources on academic integrity will help you avoid these pitfalls.

You can **achieve your goals and follow academic integrity** if you adopt good learning strategies and ask for help when you need it. Talk to your instructors if you have fallen behind and feel like cheating is the only option. [SASS](#) can help you get back on track.

Why does academic integrity matter?

Academic integrity matters because **it's what makes your degree worth something**. Studying at Queen's means you are part of a scholarly community, one in which all members—students and faculty alike—are held in mutual respect and follow the same rules. Academic integrity also supports the reputation of Queen's; universities, and the degrees they confer, are only as strong as their reputations.

Departing from academic integrity can also have [serious consequences](#) for you personally, from failing a course to being expelled from Queen's. Keep the big picture in mind: you're paying a lot of money for the opportunity to learn and develop your knowledge and yourself.

Cheating affects those around you, but, most of all, it affects *you*—ultimately, you are cheating yourself.

Maryellen Weimer, professor emerita at Pennsylvania State University, outlines [some of the consequences of cheating](#) in a blog post on the [Teaching Professor Blog](#). Paraphrased from [that blog post](#), here are **six reasons not to cheat**:

(1) Knowledge is cumulative.

What you learn later will draw on what you're learning now. Cheating now means you'll have to do twice the work later to catch up.

(2) Train your brain.

When you cheat, you don't learn. You won't develop your writing, critical thinking, and problem solving. These critically important skills are ones that employers will assume you have upon graduation.

(3) Once a cheater...

Research shows that cheating is almost never a one-time thing. In fact, you might get used to cheating and do it after you leave Queen's (e.g., at work, on your taxes, with unethical business practices, in your personal life).

(4) It's about integrity.

It doesn't feel good when people are dishonest with you. Think about the kind of person you want to be: it probably isn't someone who cheats.

(5) You've got this.

You can achieve your goals without cheating! Successful university students adopt effective and ethical approaches to learning and studying. There are resources on campus (like SASS) that can help.

(6) Pride and self-respect from your grades.

You'll feel a sense of satisfaction and receive a self-respect boost from grades you've earned honestly.

Academic integrity will follow you beyond any one class to graduation and into the workforce.

Departures from academic integrity

According to the [Senate policy on academic integrity](#), the specific departures from academic integrity are: plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, falsification, forgery, and misuse of intellectual property.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is probably the most well-known breach of academic integrity. Plagiarism means using someone else's ideas, words or phrases—their intellectual property—and, intentionally or not, representing them as your own.

For example, it's plagiarism if you:

- copy text or images from the internet, a printed source, or other source and fail to provide appropriate acknowledgment
- copy from another student
- use direct quotations or paraphrased material in an assignment without appropriate acknowledgment
- paraphrase so closely that most of the phrasing resembles that of the original source
- submit the same piece of work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor(s).

How to avoid plagiarism

A key factor in scholarship is *community*. Becoming part of a community of scholars means that you are joining an ongoing discussion. It isn't necessary, especially at the undergraduate level, to create new knowledge in every assignment. Instead, you are expected to build on and refer to established knowledge.

All scholarship is built on what came before it. We all learn from others, generation to generation, across and within disciplines. So long as you acknowledge the sources of your words and ideas, you are not plagiarizing—in fact, you are doing what you're *supposed* to do!

Think of it this way:

It's not that you *have to* cite sources, it's that you *get to* cite them.

You can avoid plagiarism if you:

- learn how to [take effective notes](#) from sources
- [plan ahead](#) to give yourself enough time to complete your [assignments](#) on your own
- [strengthen your writing skills](#)
- understand [when, why, and how](#) to cite sources
- follow standard documentation formats (e.g., [MLA](#), [APA](#), [Chicago](#))
- [properly integrate sources with your own insights](#).

For more on how to avoid plagiarism in your writing assignments, see our [handout on avoiding plagiarism](#).

Use of unauthorized materials

What does it mean to use unauthorized materials?

- possessing or using forbidden study materials or aids during a test
- copying from another student's test paper

- using an unauthorized calculator or other aids during a test
- removing materials from the library without authorization
- deliberately concealing library materials.

This is the “classic” form of cheating that you have probably seen in movies or in stock photography. Leaning over to copy an answer from another student’s paper, writing formulae on your arm, using your phone to look something up, smuggling notes into an exam—these are all considered departures from academic integrity.

You can **avoid use of unauthorized materials** by:

- understanding the course material and expectations (see [Academics 101](#))
- [managing your time](#) well and [avoiding procrastination](#) throughout the term
- preparing well for tests and exams (see [understanding the exam expectations](#), [memory, test anxiety](#) and [study techniques](#))
- knowing what aids your [professor](#) will and won’t allow during a test or exam.

Facilitation or unauthorized collaboration

What is facilitation?

Facilitation refers to deliberately enabling another person’s breach of academic integrity. For example:

- knowingly allowing your essay or assignment to be copied by someone else
- buying term papers or assignments and submitting them as your own
- selling term papers or assignments.

Buying and selling academic work are more explicit examples of facilitation, ones that most students would identify as breaches of academic integrity. However, allowing a friend to copy your assignment (in whole or in part) is also cheating. If either of you is caught, you could *both* face consequences.

You can avoid **facilitation** if you:

- understand your professor’s expectations for all assignments
- [make sure you have enough time](#) to complete assignments
- [collaborate \(e.g., on group work\) with integrity](#).

Inappropriate collaboration

Is it all right to work together on an assignment?

Collaboration includes group work (for example, on a lab or assignment), jointly working on homework problems, having a friend help you rewrite a paper—even checking homework answers before submitting them. In all these cases, it is **your responsibility** to ensure that the work you submit is **the result of only your own effort**—if the work has your name on it, you are responsible for all of it.

When is it okay to collaborate? The only way to know for sure is to **ask your instructors** if, and to what extent, you can work with others on *any* assignment or task that will be submitted for marks. Never guess or assume, no matter what “everyone else” is doing.

For more information, see “[Collaborating with Integrity](#).”

Falsification

What is falsification?

It's an act of falsification to misrepresent yourself, your work, or your relationship to Queen's. For example, it's falsification if you:

- create or alter a transcript or other official document
- impersonate someone in an exam or test
- falsify or fabricate research data.

While most students violate academic integrity inadvertently, it is difficult to commit falsification by accident. This category of academic dishonesty takes purposeful effort.

You can **avoid falsification** if you:

- [plan ahead](#) so that you have enough time to find materials, gather data, do your readings, or study course content.
- always **honestly** portray your own and others' work. Sometimes what you perceive to be the wrong numbers or seemingly insignificant data can turn out to be just as valuable as what you expect to find.
- keep lines of communication open with your professor or graduate supervisor and discuss challenges.

Forgery or the use of forged materials

What is forgery?

Forgery is falsification taken to the extreme: it is not altering official documents, but submitting documents which are entirely fraudulent (e.g., medical notes, transcripts, etc.).

It is extremely unlikely that you could commit forgery by accident; just as with falsification, this category of academic dishonesty takes purposeful effort. Forgery is a transparently deliberate act of cheating.

Unauthorized use of intellectual property

What is intellectual property?

Intellectual property can take different forms, but broadly speaking, it is a product of intellectual or artistic effort, for example:

- slides or notes from a lecture
- exam content
- a handout from a student's presentation
- a piece of art produced by a student
- research notes
- lab notes
- a research paper (published or not).

Why is unauthorized use of intellectual property a problem?

Students and professors at Queen's own the intellectual property rights to their academic work. This means that you may not use or sell their work without their authorization. Using or selling others' work for profit or unfair academic, personal or professional advantage is a departure from academic integrity and very likely of copyright law. It also breaks the bonds of trust between instructors and students, and gives future students an

unfair advantage.

Examples of this type of departure:

- uploading course materials, such as lecture notes or slides, to note-sharing websites without an instructor's permission
- providing course materials to commercial exam prep services that have not been sanctioned by the university
- accessing and using materials from file-sharing sites.

How to avoid this form of academic dishonesty:

- Always ask your professor's permission first if you would like to distribute course materials.

If you would like to access past exams or assignments, ask your instructor if they would share them, or ask if there is a place to access past assessments to which the instructor has already consented (like an exam bank).

How SASS can help

We get it: it can be challenging to keep up with coursework, submit assignments on time, and still have time to manage the rest of your life.

Student Academic Success Services is here to help make sure that students have the skills in place to avoid departures from academic integrity. In fact, [two of the most common reasons](#) why students violate academic integrity are poor time management and lack of knowledge, both of which can be overcome with a little effort. You can do it—and we can help!

We offer a variety of resources, from workshops to online resources to one-on-one consultations.

Academic Integrity Workshops

Throughout the term, SASS [offers workshops](#) on issues related to academic integrity. For example, we have workshops on

- effective time management to help you avoid time crunches that might tempt you to cut corners
- note-taking skills to help you ensure that you've accurately recorded source material and cited the sources from which you've borrowed
- how to practice academic integrity in your writing assignments.

SASS handouts and resources

Looking for resources you can read online right now? We have:

- a resource on how to [avoid plagiarism in academic writing](#)
- an [interactive module](#) on academic integrity (includes practice questions)
- tools for [planning assignments](#), [managing your time](#), and [preparing for exams](#).

Writing & Learning appointments

Our expert staff of professional writing consultants and academic skills specialists can help you learn to

- integrate sources into your work

- properly paraphrase, quote, and use citations
- manage your time to avoid the temptation to take short cuts.

[Book an appointment online](#) to find out how we can support your writing and learning.

Frequently asked questions

Students often have specific questions about what is and isn't considered an academic integrity issue. We answer some of these questions below (adapted from the [Academic Integrity @ Queen's website](#)):

Is it true that if I paraphrase or slightly alter the wording from a source, I do not have to give credit?

This is not true. If you take anyone's ideas or words and present them as your own argument or use them to support your argument, you must give appropriate credit. If you are unsure how to do so, [click here for citation resources](#) or ask your instructor for help.

Is it true that as long as I provide a citation when I copy something, I am not plagiarizing?

Providing a citation is a good start, but you must add quotation marks if you are copying someone's idea word for word.

Am I allowed to re-submit previous assignments since I own them?

Although this may seem logical, it is prohibited and an example of "self-plagiarism." If you truly feel that your previous work is related to your current assignment or project, talk to your instructor(s) to see if it can be re-submitted or revised for an alternate submission.

Since my instructor did not ask for my sources, do I need to include any?

Just because your instructor did not ask for them, it is not a legitimate excuse to avoid giving proper credit. You may still be found to have committed plagiarism if you don't. Further, it is good practice to include your sources in order to acknowledge where your ideas come from.

Is it okay if I forgot or didn't know that I was plagiarizing/breaching other aspects of academic integrity?

It is your responsibility to understand what conduct is not permitted at the University. "Not knowing" is not an **excuse**, so you should familiarize yourself with the forms of academic dishonesty and school policies or ask your instructor if you are still unclear.

Is sharing information with friends on an assignment all right?

There is a distinction between inappropriate collaboration and ethical group work. If the work is meant to be independent, you are breaching academic integrity by discussing answers with others. If your instructor does not address the issue, it is **your responsibility to find out**, rather than assume that it is collaborative group work.

Is it true that submitting papers that I buy online is not plagiarizing, since they are available?

This is definitely not true. The act of purchasing a paper to submit is cheating.

Will I be at a disadvantage if everyone cheats except for me?

If others are earning their marks or even their degrees by cheating their way through, it won't be long before they get caught. Furthermore, they will not develop the necessary skills for life and work after university. Holding yourself to high standards of academic integrity in learning will pay off in the future and make you proud of a degree that you worked hard to get.

Still have questions about academic integrity?

Remember, you don't have to master these skills all by yourself. Many people and services at Queen's can help

you.

- [Email us!](#)
- [Book a 1:1 appointment](#) with an academic skills specialist or a professional writing consultant.
- [Complete our interactive online tutorial](#) for a more in-depth look at academic integrity.

References

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