

## What is Unauthorized Assistance?

The UCalgary **Student Academic Misconduct Policy** states that Unauthorized Assistance is **cooperating, collaborating, or otherwise giving or receiving assistance** in completing Academic Activities **without** the Instructor's permission.

Unauthorized assistance gives students an **unfair advantage** over other students. It is important that students must produce academic work that demonstrates their own academic ability; this cannot be determined if a third party has been contributing to their academic work too.

## What are some examples of Unauthorized Assistance?

- Borrowing your friend's assignment to see how they structured it.
- Working with a study group to complete an individual assignment.
- Looking up the solution to a problem online before completing the assignment.
- Getting someone else to write your paper.
- Using a file sharing website to access completed assessments.
- Showing another student your essay before the assignment is due (helping another student to commit an offence is also an academic misconduct violation).
- Using Word's track changes in a friend's essay to rewrite sentences and explain ideas.
- Sharing your computer code with another student.

## How do I know how much collaboration is allowed?

Collaborative work allows students to explore concepts in much greater depth than what would be possible individually. However, ensuring that you are submitting work that fairly demonstrates your own academic ability is important. The **Instructor decides** what the level of appropriate collaboration is for each assignment. **It may be different in each assessment in the same course and across the different faculties.** If you are unsure, always ask the Instructor for clarification.

## Case Study 1

### **Looking at a Completed Paper**

Chris has his first graded assignment for a course he is taking. It is due tomorrow and he is finally getting a chance to get to it. When he sits down to do the assignment, he realizes he has no idea where to start. Luckily, his friend, Tom took the course last year. He sends Tom an email asking for some tips on how to get started. Tom emails his old assignment from last year and Chris realizes that some of the questions are the same. Although the Professor made it clear that this work should be individual, he uses Tom's structure and some content for each of the questions that are the same, completes the remaining questions and submits the assignment.

Even though Chris only wanted some tips he will be influenced by what he reads and it will likely be too similar to Tom's paper. By copying directly, Chris is not demonstrating his own ability. Chris is also missing out on the learning for this subject, which may be needed in a later assessment.

Chris is likely to already be too far behind to catch up and he is now making a decision that should would not normally make. **Reaching out to the instructor or the TA to explain this situation is always better than cheating.** If caught, the result could be a failing grade or an F in the course.

## Case Study 2

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### Divide and Conquer: Lab Reports

Marc, Lindsey and Abdul are working together on a lab in Biology. They are assigned to work together all term. The instructions indicate that they must work together to complete the experiments and then write and submit the lab reports individually. Marc suggests that they take turns writing up the report each week and share it with each other. Each partner could then reword the report a bit and submit it.

Each member of the group is not demonstrating their own academic ability. If another course builds on the knowledge gained from these lab reports, then the students will not have acquired the knowledge they need to be successful.

**The reports must be completed individually.** Students can get help from the instructor or TA. For help with study strategies, the Student Success Centre offers appointments with academic strategists and study skills workshops.

## Case Study 3

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### Using File Sharing Websites

Jennifer has been incredibly busy and so doesn't get a chance to even look at her calculus assessment until the weekend before. She realizes that there is more to this assessment than she first thought. Feeling desperate, she Googles the title of the assessment and finds a site that offers her access to instructor material for her course. She pays the fee, accesses the site and finds all of the solutions to her assessment being made available for her. Jennifer copies all of the answers and submits the paper.

Jennifer is not demonstrating her own academic ability by copying the answers. Jennifer is trusting people that she does not know to provide her with the correct answers. If a further paper builds on this one, Jennifer is missing vital knowledge. File sharing sites also violate the intellectual property rights of instructors.

Jennifer should reach out to the instructor or TA for help in understanding and starting her assessment as soon as possible. If time management is a contributing factor, then the **assignment tracker** or Student Success Centre **workshops** would be very helpful.

## How can I help my friends and protect myself?

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Unauthorized assistance is frequently the result of good intentions and trying to help a friend in need. The best way to avoid accidental unauthorized assistance and help your friends is to:

- ✓ Help them to understand the material by discussing the concepts in general.
- ✓ Encourage them to get help from their Instructor or TA as soon as possible.
- ✓ Avoid sitting next to your friends and discussing ideas when you are both working on the same assignment.
- ✓ Compare feedback after the assessment has been marked.
- ✓ Tell you friends about the supports and resources available at the Student Success Centre.