



Academic Integrity: Your Rights as a Student

Why is academic integrity such a big issue?

Your professors do not enjoy monitoring academic integrity. They just want you to learn. This is also why they assign challenging projects, papers, and tests, even though they know that difficult assignments are incredibly stressful. Cheating prevents you from learning, sometimes by keeping you from practicing important skills or synthesizing course materials, and sometimes by making it very difficult for your professor to tell when there is something you don't understand, or to give you the feedback that will help you reach the next level.

What happens if I am suspected of academic dishonesty?

Professors may identify academic dishonesty by comparing your work to the assignment instructions, the internet, and the work of other students in class, or by seeing something during exam proctoring. If there is sufficient evidence, professors may reduce your grade on an assignment or in the class. Faculty are required to report you to the [Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) (CSRR). Your instructor's decisions on academic dishonesty are completely separate from the CSRR process.

You can expect your professor to:

- Investigate before accusing you. Professors should not act solely on a flag from proctoring software, or a hunch.
- Explain what they think you did, and why they suspect academic dishonesty.
- Give you a chance to present evidence that you did your own work.
- Apply the same standards and sanctions to all students.

What if they don't?

- Request a meeting with your professor. Bring evidence that shows you did your own work. Ask if you can bring a friend for emotional support or to take notes. Your friend should listen quietly; they should not intercede in the conversation.
- If your professor refuses to meet, you can find help from your advisor, a college student success center, [the Student Success Help Desk](#), or by talking with your professor's department chair. You can find department chairs from department websites.

You can appeal:

If you want to appeal your professor's decision – because you did not commit academic dishonesty or because you think the punishment was too harsh, for example – contact the [Student Ombuds](#) to file a formal grievance. You can also utilize the [CSRR judicial process](#) to rebut accusations of misconduct.

What you can do to avoid accusations of academic dishonesty:

- Read the syllabus for each of your classes and follow assignment instructions.
- Ask what materials and what kinds of collaboration are acceptable on each assignment.
- Use footnotes or lists of sources on assignments, as is appropriate to each class.
- Keep evidence that shows that you did your own work -- diagrams, notes you took while you studied, or rough drafts of papers -- until the end of the term.
- Do not post homework or exam problems or questions on the internet or social media.

Finally, remember: Successful People Ask for Help.

If you find yourself cheating or tempted to cheat because you do not feel ready for an exam or fear you won't do well on an assignment, ask for help!

- Talk to your professor during their office hours. You can organize a study session with classmates during your professor's office hours.
- Ask your professor about tutoring or supplementary instruction for their class.
- Go to the Writing Center (<https://writingcenter.sdsu.edu/>) or Math and Stats Learning Center (<https://mlc.sdsu.edu/>)

If you are tempted to cheat because you don't feel like you have time to finish an assignment or study for a test:

- Get a good night's sleep and just try to do your best.
- Ask your professor if it is better to a) turn in work on time but imperfect, b) to ask for an extension, or c) to turn in work late. Every professor has different policies about late work, so the answer will be different in each class.
- Try to get started earlier next time by setting up a work schedule with a friend, and supporting each other in sticking to that schedule.

If you are tempted to cheat because you are stressed out or struggling to stay motivated:

- Talk to somebody! The SDSU [Student Success Help Desk](#) can help you find the office or service you need. You can also get support from [Counseling Services](#), or one of the [cultural resource centers](#).