

Academic Integrity and Academic Excellence for International Students

Tips for Faculty Working with International Students in the Classroom

Academic integrity is integral in the pursuit of academic excellence. The following tips, drawn from various higher education and professional resources, are designed to help promote academic integrity and foster academic excellence.

Cross-Cultural Perspective

(This section contains information from a cross-cultural education perspective. This non-exhaustive list provides a sampling of issues that students, especially those new to the U.S., may understand and/or experience.)

- **Grading Systems and Course Credit** – Because grading systems differ around the world, some students may not understand GPA and how it is calculated. Similarly, some students may be unfamiliar with course credits, how the number of course credits for a particular class is determined, and the role that number plays in calculating the GPA.
- **Student/Instructor Relationship** – Some students come from cultures and education systems where the relationship between the instructor and student is more formal than what one would typically experience in the U.S. A student may be more used to a teacher-centered than student-center education style. Dialoguing with and questioning the reasoning of a professor might be against the societal norm in the student’s home country. Additionally, some students might not feel comfortable, at least at first, in an informal setting such as a one-on-one discussion with their professor or a class meeting in a restaurant or outside on the lawn.
- **Faculty Office Hours** – The concept of faculty office hours may be new to some students. Certain students may feel uneasy about utilizing office hours, especially initially, since contact with professors outside of the classroom in their own culture might not have been customary.
- **Collaboration vs. Competition (Working Together)** – Some students come from societies where collaboration in education and learning has a greater emphasis than competition, which is not generally the case in the U.S. Some students might have a different understanding of the meaning and range of acceptance of collaboration in class, and on examinations, papers and other assignments.
- **Research and Citation Methods** – Research and citation methods differ between education systems around the world. Some students may come from societies where attribution is unnecessary. A student may come from a cultural background where paraphrasing is considered disrespectful. In other cultures, citing word-for-word without mentioning sources might indicate a level of respect to the author whereas changing the author’s text may be judged as disrespectful.
- **Common Knowledge** – What constitutes common knowledge naturally differs for students depending on the countries and cultures from which they come. In a collectivist culture, knowledge is inclined to be community property. In these and other cultures, the concept of intellectual property may be quite foreign.
- **Other Faculty Resources:** If you are interested in investigating further the cross-cultural perspective of academic integrity, read “U.S. Classroom Culture” by Michael Smithee, Sidney Greenblatt and Alisa Eland (2004). This document is designed for the student new to the U.S. (www.nafsa.org/_/document/_/u.s.pdf). Another good resource is “International Students and Plagiarism: A Review of the Literature” by Chris Keenan and Peter Jemmeson ([http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/centre-for-academic-practice/Plagiarism and International Students.doc](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/centre-for-academic-practice/Plagiarism%20and%20International%20Students.doc))

In the Beginning Stages

- Clearly articulate expectations you have for students in your course.
- Incorporate a strong statement in your syllabus about academic integrity in your class.
- Discuss the meaning of definitions related to academic dishonesty as they pertain to your course: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication and facilitating academic dishonesty.
- Explain the range of consequences and sanctions for academic dishonesty.
- Encourage students to utilize your office hours and other appointment times to further their understanding of your expectations for class meetings, papers, examinations and other assignments.
- Explain your grading system, including letter vs. number grades, percentage of different grades toward the overall grade, and how grades in your class affect the GPA.

Papers, Examinations and Other Assignments

- Describe the purpose of a syllabus and each of its components. Talk with students about meanings of different types of course activities and specific expectations you have for each: research papers, examinations (e.g. in class, take home, open book, etc.), group projects, and class participation.
- Define clearly your expectations regarding collaborative and group projects, including what portions of the assignment can be done in group and which must be done individually, and the use of editing, tutoring and other resources.
- Discuss your required citation style and generally how they differ from other methods.
- Help guide students by giving specific writing topics and requesting use of particular sources in their papers (e.g. articles, books, interviews, etc.).
- Review and offer feedback on certain stages of writing and other assignments. Encourage students to ask questions and clarify their understanding of your expectations at each stage of especially paper assignments, including accuracy of citation methods, scope of the topic, use of materials and information from fellow students, etc.
- Offer samples of written work demonstrating both correct and incorrect ways of paraphrasing and citing sources.

Information and Resources

- DU Code of Conduct and Honor Code – Encourage students to read, understand and take responsibility for the University Code of Conduct and Honor Code located at www.du.edu/ccs.
- Graduate School Handbooks – When appropriate, encourage graduate students to obtain, read and understand their respective graduate school student handbook and especially its references to academic integrity.
- Citation Resources – Offer recommendations on related citation resources, including materials to help students recognize citation standards of different disciplines and sources (e.g. Chicago style, MLA, APA, etc.), and instruction and practice on paraphrasing.
- U.S. Classroom Culture – Suggest reading of “U.S. Classroom Culture” brochure to students new to the U.S. education system (www.nafsa.org/ /document/ /u.s.pdf).

Sources: “Cheating or Sharing” conference session presented by Anne Hayner, Opal Leeman Bartzis and Annette Tesoriero, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Montreal, Canada (2006); “International Students and Plagiarism: A Review of the Literature” by Chris Keenan and Peter Jemmeson; “Teaching Practices that Promote Academic Integrity and Academic Excellence” prepared by the Office of the Provost, American University (2002).

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