UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
STUDENT CONDUCT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY

TIP SHEET for Instructors

What is inappropriate collaboration?

Collaboration
Students are encouraged to engage in and benefit from collaboration as part of their academic experience. At its best, collaboration can lead to greater student learning, engagement and development. Unfortunately, it can also be a way to avoid completing work individually when required, and that is when it becomes inappropriate.

Inappropriate Collaboration
There is no single section of the Code of Student Behaviour ("the Code") dealing with inappropriate collaboration. Depending on the specific facts of a case, applicable sections might include:

30.3.2(1) Plagiarism   No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

30.3.2(2) Cheating (b) No Student shall represent or attempt to represent him or herself as another or have or attempt to have himself or herself represented by another in the taking of an examination, preparation of a paper or other similar activity. See also misrepresentation in 30.3.6 (4).

30.3.2(2) Cheating (c) No student shall represent another's substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as the Student's own work.

30.3.6(4) Misrepresentation of Facts   No Student shall misrepresent pertinent facts to any member of the University community for the purpose of obtaining academic or other advantage. This includes such acts as the failure to provide pertinent information on an application for admission or the altering of an educational document/transcript. (EXEC 04 MAY 2009)

Defining appropriate collaboration
The line between appropriate and inappropriate collaboration can be confusing for students. That line is

defined by the Instructor on each and every assignment. For example, some assignments must be completed individually. Others are group assignments which require collaboration. Some fall into the grey area in between, and can be perplexing to students who are inclined to work together, especially when Instructors are not explicit about their expectations. Students should be encouraged to ask the instructor if they are unsure of the expectations for working together.

Examples
Confusing statement: "Go ahead and work together on a conceptual level."
Clearer statement: "You must complete this assignment on your own, but feel free to discuss the concepts with your classmates before working on it."

Confusing statement: "This is a group project."
Clearer statement: "The group will get one mark on this project which will be reflected in each group member's grade. Please provide a page that indicates how your group approached the project and what each group member contributed."

Why is this important?
Student work is assessed and students receive a grade for each course. Those grades ultimately form the student's academic record, communicated on the transcript. Grades are expected to be an accurate reflection of a student's performance and mastery of the material. While many workplaces value and expect collaboration, and we can use assignments to approximate what that might look like in a professional setting, an academic environment only allows for assigning grades to individuals.

It is important for students to understand when working in groups that if one student submits plagiarized material for the project, all of the group members may be charged under the Code. Each student is responsible for any material submitted with his or her name on it, so all must be vigilant to ensure sources are used and cited properly when engaging in group work.

For more information please contact Student Conduct and Accountability at 780-492-0777, or studentconduct@ualberta.ca.