

## **Physics and Astronomy Department Policy on Academic Cheating and Plagiarism**

(Adapted from Oregon State University Computer Science Department policy, SFSU Computer Science Department Policy, and Montana State University Physics Department Policy.)

The policies of San Francisco State University with respect to cheating and plagiarism are stated in the SFSU Bulletin. This department policy states specific practices that are prohibited and the procedure for handling cases of academic cheating or plagiarism.

### **Basic Definition of Academic Cheating and Plagiarism**

By academic cheating and plagiarism we mean presenting, as your own work, material produced by or in collaboration with others, or permitting or assisting others to present your work as their own without proper acknowledgment.

### **Requirement on Originality of Student Work; Prohibited Practices**

Any work submitted by students must be their own. They are not allowed to copy someone else's work or paraphrase another student's paper or exam or published solutions and submit the copied or paraphrased work as their own. Any work that is someone else's must be clearly identified as such with credit given. In the case of collaborative work, it is certainly permissible to have appropriate interactions; however, unless instructions explicitly state otherwise, students will prepare their own separate and individual exams, reports, or papers.

It should be clear that there is latitude for difference among individual instructors, particularly on the matter of when working with other students or adapting material from a textbook is permissible. The following general policy on cooperation on homework assignments holds: In the case of homework assignments, it is acceptable to discuss the meaning of assignments and general approaches and strategies for handling those assignments with other members of the academic community. Any cooperation beyond that point, including shared equations, shared explanations, or shared diagrams or computer program code, is only acceptable if specifically so permitted by the class instructor in written guidelines distributed to the entire class.

Under no circumstances are take-home exams collaborative, and, during the take-home time frame, there will be absolutely no discussion of the exam questions with anyone other than the instructor, and no consulting of books, internet resources, or other materials unless specifically authorized by the instructor.

In the case of laboratories where groups do experiments and take data together, students are to keep their own lab notebooks and prepare their own lab analysis and reports. Lab notebooks are not to be shared and data are not to be given to students who did not participate in the experiment.

Whenever possible, student work to be used for evaluative purposes should be done in class or lab or some other controlled environment.

## **Guidelines for Determining if Cheating or Plagiarism Has Occurred.**

The instructor may suspect a student of solution plagiarism if the student submits a solution that is so similar to the solution submitted by a present or past student in the course that the solutions may be converted to one another by a simple transformation.

The instructor may suspect a student of cheating, whether on a homework assignment or an examination, if the student cannot explain both the intricacies of his or her solution and the techniques and principles used to generate that solution.

## **Procedure for Faculty Handling of Academic Cheating or Plagiarism Cases**

The instructor will discuss violations of this policy with the student(s) and then will inform the student(s) in writing of the charge and state the evidence. A copy will go to the Department Chair and a record will be kept in the Physics and Astronomy department office. The student must meet with the Department Chair to discuss the violation

GTAs will bring cheating matters to the Professor in charge of the course who will then implement this policy.

## **Penalty for Academic Cheating or Plagiarism**

In cases of academic cheating or plagiarism, no credit will be given for the assignment in question. If a second or further incident is reported for an individual, or if the circumstances of a first incident so warrant, a letter describing the incident(s) will be forwarded to the Student Discipline Officer for possible disciplinary action, which may include expulsion, suspension, or probation; as well as lesser sanctions. Please refer to the Supplemental Regulations and Procedures section of the SFSU Bulletin for details.

## **Examples of Academic Cheating or Plagiarism**

Please consult with your course instructor if you have any questions regarding whether or not your work with other students and/or materials prepared for submission are appropriate. The following examples illustrate situations when Academic Cheating and/or Plagiarism has and has not occurred. Please note these lists are not comprehensive! See also the reference materials posted by the SFSU Center for the Enhancement of Teaching on Academic Integrity: <http://www.cet.sfsu.edu/index.cfm?section=etl>

*Academic Cheating and/or Plagiarism has occurred:*

- when a student turns in the work of another student and represents it as his or her own work.
- when a student knowingly permits another to turn in his or her work.
- when a student copies equations, explanations, diagrams, or computer code from the work of another student.

- When a student deliberately transforms borrowed sections of a solution in order to disguise their origin.
- When several students collaborate on a project and fail to inform the instructor of this.
- When a student copies or paraphrases homework solutions distributed in a prior semester.
- When a student uses content from other sources (such as the Internet or solution manuals or sets purchased on e-bay) and includes it in his/her work or projects without proper attribution
- When a student uses Internet or other services to post assignments and seek solutions
- When Internet resources are used verbatim and/or "cut and pasted" into students work regardless whether they are acknowledged or not.

*Academic Cheating or Plagiarism has not occurred:*

- when students have permission to collaborate on a project, and list all collaborators.
- When students receive advice from instructors, teaching assistants, or staff members involved in the course.
- When students share knowledge about solution approaches and strategies on homework. (Not permitted on take-home exams.)
- When students engage in a general discussion of the nature of an assignment, the requirements for an assignment, or general implementation strategies. (Not permitted on take-home exams.)
- When students compare independent solutions to an assignment in order to better understand the nature of the assignment. (Not permitted on take-home exams.)
- When students engage in discussion of course concepts or solution strategies in preparation for an assignment or examination.
- When students copy computer code and cite its source on assignments for which the instructor allows inclusion of code other than the student's own.

### **Distribution of this Policy**

Copies of this policy will be available in the department office and posted on bulletin boards within the department and on the department web page.

An announcement of the existence of the policy will be made by the instructor at the first meeting each semester of every Physics and Astronomy class, at which time any course specific guidelines on cooperation and use of published programs can also be stated. For lower division courses, reference to this policy and statement of any course specific guidelines will be included in the course syllabus distributed to all students.