

# 1 - Collaboration Policies

## 1.1 Background

The following information on the collaboration policy is an updated version of the 2007 edit of the “Collaboration Policy” written by Drs. Lisa Huettel and Gary Ybarra for ECE 27L. Incremental changes were made by Dr. Michael Gustafson for the Spring, 2013 semester. For the Fall, 2014, semester, the policy was changed to allow comparisons of final answers - though not the processes by which they were obtained - on homework assignments. Further alterations to the section on homework collaboration were based on Dr. Tom Katsouleas’ Fall 2014 ECE 110L syllabus. In Spring of 2015, alterations were made in the Introduction / Summary after consultation with former Associate Dean Stephen Bryan. In Fall of 2015, the policy was made more general to all upper-level classes taught by Dr. Gustafson, with minor modifications added in Spring of 2017. Starting with the Fall 2019 semester, I am using a slightly looser collaboration policy on homework than in previous semesters. Please note - lab policies will be discussed in lab and are generally more restrictive than homework policies!

## 1.2 Policy Summary

The key elements of the collaboration policy are:

- (1) Use of solution manuals, prior homework submissions, online answer keys, and the like are strictly forbidden prior to turning in an assignment for any reason. You are certainly allowed to consult the answers in the back of the book, though note that there is no guarantee those are all correct! Solutions will be posted after assignments have been submitted. Certainly, after you have turned in your assignment you are permitted to consult other references.
- (2) You can work with other students in the class while doing the homework and are encouraged to discuss the steps you plan to take as you are taking them.
- (3) You can compare final homework answers with other students in the class to see if those answers match.
- (4) If your final homework answers do not match (or even if they do), you are allowed to discuss the processes by which you decided to use a particular method or methods. You may also compare your steps along the way. Note that the latter means individuals need to have worked on the problems - individually or collectively - first before starting to compare processes!
- (5) You are *not* permitted to simply allow someone to copy your work. I am encouraging collaboration, not merely appropriation or donation!
- (6) When you turn in the homework, the work should represent your current understanding of the material in the homework.

## 1.3 Ramifications of Disallowed Collaboration

According to university policy, when a student produces academically questionable work, the work is to be submitted to the Office of Student Conduct (OSC). The questionable work may then be examined by a hearing committee composed of three students and two faculty or staff members in order to provide an outside, objective evaluation. At a hearing, the student is given the opportunity to explain how the questionable work was completed. If the student is found responsible for academic dishonesty, the baseline sanction is suspension for two semesters.

## 1.4 Examples

Examples of academically dishonest behavior that we have previously encountered include:

- (1) Submission of photocopies of another student’s computer code or code otherwise copied from another student.
- (2) Submission of computer output generated by another student.
- (3) Submission of a lab report for which the lab exercise was never performed.
- (4) Submission of a lab report in which data sets or other materials from another student were copied.
- (5) Submission of a homework assignment that contained work simply hand-copied from another student.
- (6) Submission of a homework assignment that contained work copied from a solutions manual or other repository.

## 1.5 Guidelines

Here are some guidelines which, if followed, should reduce the likelihood of academic dishonesty occurring:

- (1) If you are not sure if some form of collaboration is allowed, **ask first**. Academic integrity issues do not lend themselves well to seeking forgiveness versus asking permission.
- (2) Hand in your own work. Do not have someone else turn in your work. Do not allow your work out of your possession. If are unable to turn in your work for some reason and need someone to do it for you, be sure it is someone you trust to maintain the integrity of your work.
- (3) You are encouraged to work closely with your lab partner(s) in the laboratory and in the writing of any *joint* lab reports. Be sure that the names, NetIDs, and signatures of all members of the group are on your joint lab report. You are not to confer with students other than your lab partner(s) for generating your lab reports, and you are responsible for knowing which reports are to be done jointly and which are individual exercises. You are responsible for understanding the collaboration policies of lab and, if unsure, see Guideline (1) above!
- (4) Group problem solving sessions are encouraged in which *practice problems* and *old test problems* (not to be turned in for a grade) are solved jointly. You are also allowed to work on active homework problems in group problem sessions - but again, the idea is to collaborate (and learn), not to simply copy (and deny yourself the knowledge and perhaps wisdom from doing the work yourself).
- (5) Discussion of general concepts is always encouraged.
- (6) Do not allow anyone else to use your computer account (This is a direct violation of university policy. Violations may result in the account being frozen).
- (7) Do not post homework solutions or specific processes to get homework solutions in public posts on communication channels such as CampusWire, Piazza, or Sakai. You can post general questions in those arenas. If you have a specific question about a specific process for a specific homework, you can make a Piazza post **to the instructors only** or go to office hours.
- (8) When you interact with other students, actively consider the nature of the information exchanged. When the pressure rises, be especially aware that the pressure can alter your judgment.

## 1.6 Conclusions

Development of academic integrity is a natural part of the maturation process. By including homework and lab grades in the algorithm for determining final course grades and encouraging appropriate collaboration, professors encourage the development of academic integrity.

Finally, if you find yourself in a situation where there is simply too much to get done, and the pressure mounts - it is best to stop, take a breath, and get in touch with one of the instructors to see what can be worked out. It is *never* to your advantage to take unethical shortcuts.