

Policy on Academic Integrity and Collaboration

This document describes the course policy on academic integrity and collaborations on homework assignments. It is posted on the course web site for your reference. You **must** read this document at the beginning of the course; submitting an assignment implies that you accept and have complied with the policy for that assignment. If you are uncertain as to how to comply with this policy, please ask the instructor.

1 Collaboration with Other Students

Verbal discussion of ideas, general approaches, etc. with other students is permitted. Theory courses aren't much fun if you can't talk about your ideas! However, each student's written work is expected to be entirely his or her own. The following rules try to balance everyone's desire for free discussion with the instructor's need to assess each student's individual capability.

1. Please keep group discussions of the homework problems to no more than four people, all of whom are participating. In larger groups, there is an unavoidable tendency for some people to “lurk” and pick up hints on the problems, without actually contributing to their own or anyone else's understanding of the material.
2. If you discuss an assignment with another student, neither party may carry any written material or code away from the discussion. In particular, you may not collaboratively write homeworks. This rule also means that you can't save email from a discussion to refer to later while writing your solutions.
3. You may not share your previously written material as part of a discussion. In particular, you may not read someone else's written solutions or code or give your own solutions or code to someone else to read unless both of you have already turned in your assignments.
4. Using the Piazza forums to discuss and post questions about assignments is fine (even in a group of more than four), subject to the above rules about not sharing materials. In particular, **do not** use these forums to share proposed solutions with other students. You should post proposed solutions *only* to the “grading” folder, for purposes of seeking the right to grade a problem, and you must limit your post's visibility to the instructor and TAs.
5. *The “Iron Chef” Rule*: if you discuss a problem with another student, you must then go do something completely unrelated for at least **one hour** before writing any part of your own solution. For example, go watch an episode of *Ryori no Tetsujin*, a.k.a. *Iron Chef* (Allez cuisine!). This rule is really helpful for differentiating what you actually understand from what you've merely cached in your short-term memory.

(In the interests of full disclosure, I borrowed this rule from a former professor of mine, who called it the “Gilligan's Island” Rule.)

Please honor the spirit as well as the letter of these rules. Try to do as much of the assignments as you can on your own before seeking help from your peers. Don't just tell other students how to solve a problem, or lead them to the solution via “hints;” instead, look at the practice problems together to explain the principles of

how to solve the problem. If you ever feel uncomfortable discussing your work, or you don't see how to help someone without simply giving away answers, please refer them to a TA or to the instructor rather than trying to sort things out on your own.

Keep in mind that your performance on exams constitutes more than half your course grade, so it ultimately does you no good to let other people do your assignments for you without learning the material. Conversely, you're not doing your fellow students a favor by helping them do their assignments without learning the material.

Finally, please note that people have in the past gotten themselves in trouble by copying down from memory partial solutions shown to them by a friend. The graders will see everyone's assignments and so will catch this sort of thing. The rules about not sharing written work, as well as the Iron Chef Rule, are supposed to prevent such (often unintended) copying, so please follow them!

2 Acknowledging Sources of Assistance

Each time you turn in a homework, you are required to list any sources of assistance you received in solving the problems. Please specify within your submission document where you got help and what kind of help you received for each problem.

In general, you may use your course text, the TAs, the instructor, and any written materials we provide to help you with your assignments. You may *not* use any of the following sources:

- previous years' solutions to homeworks or exams;
- solutions, code, or worked examples from other written sources (e.g. web sites) that solve a problem equivalent or highly similar to one appearing on an assignment;
- Blogs, newsgroups, or other assemblages of "experts."

As an exception to the above rules, you can use whatever reference material you want to answer general questions about discrete math and proof techniques.

Discussions with friends who aren't currently taking the course, other faculty, your mother, Don Knuth, the NSA, etc. are subject to the rules and guidelines outlined in the previous section. You must tell the other person in advance that the discussion pertains to a current course assignment, and you must report the help you received.

Note that claiming that you "forgot" to attribute a source is not a mitigating circumstance. It is your responsibility to describe where you got help in doing your homework.

3 Sanctions

In cases where a student is found to have violated the course collaboration policy, the instructor's usual practice is to impose a loss of credit equal to 200% of the assignment on which the violation occurred. For example, if a violation occurs on one or more problems of an assignment that is worth 10% of your grade, you will receive no credit for the (entire) assignment *and* an additional 10% off your final grade. More severe penalties may be recommended for particularly egregious or repeated violations, including failure of the course and such other disciplinary actions as are warranted and allowed by Washington University.

Accusations of policy violations will be adjudicated by the School of Engineering (for undergrads and MS students) or the Graduate School (for PhD students).