

Teaching Guide for GSIs

Academic Misconduct: Cheating, Plagiarism, and Other Forms

Most students understand, in a general way, that their academic achievements are premised on academic integrity: honesty, fairness, trust, respect, accountability, and responsibility. The academic community thrives when all members adhere to these habits of integrity, and GSIs have an important role in fostering students' commitment to academic integrity.

Students generally want to do things right, but academic misconduct does occur. Sometimes the students err because they're not aware of the rules, and some students commit academic misconduct knowing that they are doing so.

Academic misconduct is, fortunately, the exception rather than the norm. However, it does occur. Most GSIs will encounter it in some form in their teaching careers. For that reason, it is important to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and of the procedures for addressing it. It is no less important to know the most common causes of academic misconduct so that, with appropriate instruction, it can be avoided.

The University of California is a community of scholars committed to maintaining an environment that encourages personal and intellectual growth. It is a community with high standards and high expectations for those who choose to become a part of it, including establishing rules of conduct intended to foster behaviors that are consistent with a civil and educational setting. Members of the University community are expected to comply with all laws, University policies, and campus regulations, conducting themselves in ways that support a scholarly environment. In this context, faculty are guided by the Faculty Code of Conduct, Section 015 of the Academic Personnel Manual, and students by the UC Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct, articulated here.

— *UC Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct*

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Defining Academic Misconduct

The University defines academic misconduct as “any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community” ([UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct](#)).*

When the topic of academic misconduct comes up, we usually think of cheating and plagiarism. It is a much broader concept, however. Here are other examples of academic misconduct:

- Removing, defacing, or deliberately keeping from other students library materials that are on reserve for specific courses.
- Contaminating laboratory samples or altering indicators during a practical exam, such as moving a pin in a dissection specimen for an anatomy course.

Theft or damage of intellectual property is another category. Examples:

- Distributing lecture notes without the express permission of the instructor is also off limits to students. Selling, distributing, website posting, or publishing course lecture notes, handouts, readers, recordings, or other information provided by an instructor, or using them for any commercial purpose, without the express permission of the instructor. (The University’s policy about note-taking, updated in 2011, specifies several protections for instructor-authored content, including the content that you as an instructor develop, against distribution to people outside the course without the instructor’s prior written consent, and against commercial profit by students.**)
- Sabotaging or stealing another person’s assignment, book, paper, notes, experiment, project, or electronic hardware or software.
- Improper access to, or electronically interfering with, the property of another person or of the University via computer or other means.

Disturbances in the classroom can also serve to create an unfair academic advantage for oneself or disadvantage for another member of the academic community. Here are some examples that may violate the Code of Student Conduct:

- Interfering with the course of instruction to the detriment of other students.
- Disrupting classes or other academic activities in an attempt to stifle academic freedom of speech.
- Failing to comply with the instructions or directives of the course instructor.
- Phoning in falsified bomb threats.
- Unnecessarily activating a fire alarm.

Providing false information or representation, and fabricating or altering information, can constitute academic misconduct. Some examples:

- Furnishing false information in the context of an academic assignment.
- Failing to identify yourself honestly in the context of an academic obligation.
- Fabricating or altering information or data and presenting it as legitimate.
- Providing false or misleading information to an instructor or any other University official.

Altering University documents is another kind of academic misconduct. Examples:

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- Altering a previously graded exam or assignment for the purpose of a grade appeal or of gaining points in a re-grading process.
- Forging an instructor's signature on a letter of recommendation or any other document.
- Submitting an altered transcript of grades to or from another institution or employer.
- Putting your name on another person's exam or assignment.

Cheating and plagiarism are perhaps the most prominent forms of academic misconduct, and they are addressed in other sections of this chapter of the Teaching Guide for GSIs.

* Material for this section is drawn mainly from the UC Berkeley [Center for Student Conduct](#) and the [GSI Professional Standards and Ethics Online Course, Module 4](#).

**[UC Berkeley Policy on Course Note-Taking and Materials \(pdf\)](#).

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Factors that Can Contribute to Academic Misconduct

This section of the Teaching Guide for GSIs addresses some of the common causes of or factors contributing to students' commission of academic misconduct. Addressing these causes and factors can help students negotiate their academic difficulties without resorting to unfair means.

Factors

[Ineffective Study Habits](#)

[Ineffective Time Management Skills or Overload](#)

[Psychological factors](#)

[Not Knowing the Boundaries](#)

Prevention

[Prevention through Instructional Approaches](#)

Ineffective Study Habits

One of the most common causes of academic misconduct is ineffective or inadequate study habits, for example superficial reading practices and last-minute cramming. Some students may need to enlarge their repertoire of academic strategies to cope with their courses' intellectual demands. If students are not familiar with effective and legitimate strategies, they may be tempted to try dishonest ones.

You can help students address this issue directly by discussing reading and study strategies with them in class. Do this several weeks before an exam, and alert students to the problems associated with last-minute cramming and sleep loss. When a student comes to your office hours saying he or she is having trouble with the material, ask how the student goes about learning the material in his or her study time, and explore ways to improve study or homework strategies for your course. Further suggestions for helping students with their study habits appear in the [Plagiarism](#) and [Cheating](#) pages of this Teaching Guide chapter.

You can also refer students — or obtain information yourself — from the Student Learning Center's excellent [Study and Success Strategies](#) page.

Ineffective Time Management Skills or Overload

Assignments and test preparation are sometimes left to the last minute because a student has not yet worked out how to organize and prioritize the work, or how to handle multiple large course projects or exams simultaneously. Some students maintain high commitments to extracurricular activities, outside jobs, or family responsibilities in addition to their university studies. Under such circumstances a student may intentionally or unintentionally resort to dishonest practices in an attempt to raise their grade.

Students need to understand that overloading themselves will inevitably affect their academic work and that they may need additional skills and resources to handle all that they're taking on.

Psychological Factors

Students will sometimes procrastinate or avoid studying because they may harbor unrealistic expectations of themselves — for example, that they have to appear more sophisticated or knowledgeable than they feel they are, or that they shouldn't show that they don't understand something, or that they should be able to do all their academic work with equal success regardless of the difficulty of the material. You may recognize their feelings in your own experience — the sense that

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“everyone here is so much smarter than I am!” Students may fear betraying this feeling. Fear can produce paralysis, leading to desperate last-minute measures. Students who feel they don’t have their own ideas or who are afraid to express their ideas may be tempted, even unconsciously, to borrow others’ ideas. Likewise, students who don’t understand course concepts from the material presented can be tempted to resort to unacceptable means of obtaining a good grade.

You can help by explaining to students that one of the primary purposes of section and office hours is to help them develop their knowledge in a safe environment. They are not expected to know everything already, but to work together and individually to increase their knowledge and understanding. Exploration, not avoidance, is the better way forward.

One way GSIs foreground the learning process — and one way students learn to put aside their anxiety— is to use [online discussion forums](#). Many GSIs have found that students who have otherwise been reticent in class feel free to ask questions and experiment with ideas on line. They can also gain confidence as they find that they can answer their peers’ questions or offer valuable ideas to the conversation.

Not Knowing the Boundaries

Finally, an increasingly common cause of academic misconduct is ignorance or lack of clarity about what it is or why some practices are unacceptable. Because U.S. university standards may not have been addressed in students’ previous academic experiences, students may arrive at UC Berkeley without a clear understanding of what constitutes academic misconduct or why there are disciplinary sanctions on some behaviors.

Types of academic misconduct that are prone to occur as a result of unfamiliarity or misunderstanding include the following:

- Splitting an assignment with or working too closely with another student in a way that results in both handing in nearly the same piece of work. Instructors need to be clear about their expectations around student collaboration and individual responsibilities.
- Submitting the same paper for grading in different courses. Students often think this is okay because they are the original authors of the papers in question. However, there is a university policy against it. Students receive course credit for each class in which they complete all the work satisfactorily; they may build on what they learn from one course to the next, but they must complete the work for each course separately.
- Plagiarizing from electronic resources. The free availability of information on the Internet has led to the common belief that if something is on the web it must be fair game for students to copy and use as their own. Encouragement to create mash-ups as assignments in some high school classes may also lead to confusion in the college environment.

Let students know up front what the expectations are for your course and your field, what some of the misconceptions are, and what the consequences are for ignoring the boundaries of academic integrity. Have a talk early in the semester with the Instructor of Record for the course about special concerns or policies that the instructor thinks may be likely to come up and how the Instructor of Record deals with them.

Prevention through Instructional Approaches

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In general, the possibility of academic misconduct is best handled by proactively helping students develop and use legitimate strategies throughout the semester, as well as resources the university offers to help students succeed.

This is the approach taken in the Teaching Guide's sections on the most frequent forms of academic misconduct: plagiarism and cheating on exams.

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Cheating

Cheating is defined as fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in an academic assignment, or using or attempting to use materials, or assisting others in using materials, that are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question. Here are some examples:

- Copying or attempting to copy from others during an exam or on an assignment.
- Communicating answers with another person during an exam.
- Pre-programming a calculator or other personal electronic device to contain answers, or using other unauthorized information for exams.
- Using unauthorized materials, prepared answers, written notes, or concealed information during an exam.
- Allowing others to do an assignment or a portion of an assignment for you, including the use of a commercial term-paper service.
- Submitting the same assignment for more than one course without prior approval of all the instructors involved.
- Collaborating on an exam or assignment with any other person without prior approval from an instructor.
- Taking an exam for another person or having someone take an exam for you.
- Altering a previously graded exam or assignment for the purpose of a grade appeal or of gaining points in a re-grading process.
- Submitting an electronic file the student knows to be unreadable or corrupted instead of a completed assignment. The student then has extra time to finish the assignment without penalty.

Addressing Cheating

If you determine that a student very likely did cheat, you need to follow through to some kind of resolution. This is dealt with on the Teaching Guide page [If You Encounter Academic Misconduct](#).

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Exam Preparation

The most important way to prevent cheating is to help students prepare well, and prepare well in advance, for upcoming exams and assignments. Discuss different strategies for studying for an exam. Talk about good strategies for answering the questions and about how students can best divide their time in an exam. For example, some students do badly in exams when they don't plan out answers before they write them; when they spend too long on the first few questions; or when they second-guess themselves, changing their answers many times until they lose confidence. Address study and preparation several weeks before an exam, and alert students to the problems associated with procrastination, cramming, and sleep loss.

GSIs have come up with some excellent strategies to assist students in exam preparation. They notice the kinds of activities or the concepts students are having the most trouble with, and they address those creatively in class. They show students examples of the kinds of problems they will have to solve, or the kinds of questions they will have to address, on upcoming exams. (Often you can use items from exams used in previous years for in-class, collaborative practice.) Examples of exam preparation are described in some of the [GSI Teaching Effectiveness Award Essays](#).

[History — Playing Teacher: Adding Predictive Power to Students' Toolboxes, Emily Hamilton](#)

[Integrative Biology — Instilling Effective Study Skills in Students: Start Early, Know Your Weaknesses, Jennifer McGuire](#)

[Molecular & Cell Biology — Teaching Young Scientists to Speak the Way They Think, Seemay Chou](#)

[Political Science — Conquering “40% of the Grade”: Interactive Strategies for Helping Students Prepare for Comprehensive Final Exams, Wendy Sinek](#)

[Sociology — Encouraging Critical Thinking through Exam Preparation, Sarah MacDonald](#)

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Proctoring Exams

The Instructor of Record in your course probably has a protocol for ensuring academic integrity during exams. This protocol is based on the faculty member's teaching experience and talking with other faculty members. Your first resource for preventing cheating on exams is the faculty member in charge. Make sure your students are aware of the faculty member's rules.

That said, here are some principles for proctoring exams. Detecting cheating on an exam is mostly a matter of vigilance. Walk around the room and watch for wandering eyes, cell phones or other devices on desks, open books or book bags at students' feet or on a nearby chair, or students who stop writing when you walk near them. Pay particular attention to students who sit in a part of the room that is difficult to see, such as the very back row or a dark corner. Consider seating students randomly in alternating chairs to minimize chances of copying or being copied from. The faculty member may provide multiple versions of the exam with items in a different order to minimize copying.

All cell phones and other small electronic devices should be turned off and put away. Sometimes students violate this protocol without even realizing it, because using these devices is such a powerful habit. Often students will use their phone simply to keep track of the time, or assume it's okay to take a phone call during the exam. Remind them to turn off their electronics before the exam starts, and assure them that you will keep track of the time for them by writing the time on the board at various intervals throughout the exam period.

If you do see a behavior that goes against the exam protocols, do not immediately accuse the student of cheating or trying to cheat. Instead, give the entire class a general reminder of the rule and make it clear that the instructors take the rules seriously for the protection of all students. Your Instructor of Record may have more specific ideas about how to handle this during and after an exam.

Addressing Cheating

If you determine that a student very likely did cheat, you need to follow through to some kind of resolution. This is dealt with on the Teaching Guide page [If You Encounter Academic Misconduct](#).

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Cheating on Exams: Other Forms

If blue-books or green-books are used, some students may be tempted to bring in ones that have already been written in prior to the exam. This can be prevented by insisting on blank blue- or green-books, collecting all of them before the exam starts, and redistributing them randomly among the students to use during the exam. Alternatively the exam proctor can tell all students, just before the exam starts, to X out a particular page in their blue- or green-books.

Students have been known to recruit others who are better versed in the exam topic to take their test for them (“ringers”). To prevent this, advise students in advance that they will be required to show identification on the day of the test. When students arrive to take the test, check their identification. Or ask students to sit in groups according to discussion or lab section, and have each GSI take roll for his or her section.

A very worrisome scenario is when a student claims to have turned in a completed exam but the GSI does not have it; the student will then say that the GSI must have lost it and either ask to retake the exam or insist on some other kind of credit. This puts the GSI in a very difficult position, since there is no proof of the student’s story or the GSI’s proper handling of the student’s exam. To prevent this, collect exams from students personally (rather than having them all rush at you at the end of the period), and make a record of who is turning one in at the time you collect them. Another safeguard is to announce in advance that if you don’t receive an exam from a student, that student will automatically fail the exam.

Addressing Cheating

If you determine that a student very likely did cheat, you need to follow through to some kind of resolution. This is dealt with on the Teaching Guide page [If You Encounter Academic Misconduct](#).

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Plagiarism

Forms of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source. Some examples:

- Copying passages from works of others into one's homework, essay, term paper, or dissertation, without acknowledgement.
- Use of the views, opinions, or insights of another, without acknowledgement.
- Paraphrasing another person's characteristic or original phraseology, metaphor, or other literary device, without acknowledgement.

An increasingly common form of plagiarism is copying and pasting papers or articles from the Internet, or simply purchasing prewritten papers from on-line paper mills. Hundreds of these sites have been identified. Fortunately, this sort of plagiarism is also increasingly easy to detect. For further information, see the Teaching Guide page [Detecting and Addressing Plagiarism](#).

Identifying the Causes

Many instances of plagiarism are unintentional. In many cases students don't understand how to write in the ways people in a given academic field write, how to manage larger and more complex writing assignments, how to take good research notes, or how to interact fairly with other writers' ideas in their own work.

Low Confidence in Writing Skills

Some students fear that they are not sophisticated or advanced enough to write successful papers, or that their English writing skills are lacking. Some want to sound more erudite than they feel they are and resort to using someone else's words or ideas, because they think these sound better than their own. Sometimes a student wishes to project a certain image or to impress the instructor. Many students are simply unused to the style of writing demanded in a particular discipline and don't understand that this is a skill they can learn.

To address this, engage students in a discussion about the expected writing style of the discipline before their first assignment. What sections does a paper typically have? What kind of audience should they imagine writing to? Different disciplines require different writing styles, and even advanced students may be unsure about how to tackle an unfamiliar kind of assignment. Showing students sample papers can be helpful, but it is important to discuss them thoroughly so that students understand both their strengths and weaknesses. To clarify the requirements, show students the criteria you will use to evaluate their papers and have them use the criteria to evaluate a sample paper in class discussion.

The [Working with Student Writing](#) chapter of this Teaching Guide elaborates on several of these teaching strategies.

The [GSI Teaching & Resource Center](#) also offers consultation and materials to help GSIs address issues in student writing.

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Some students will have greater difficulty with their writing than others. It also helps to familiarize students with the [Student Learning Center](#). Get to know the SLC's services yourself so that you can tell students what to expect when they go there.

Unrealistic Expectations about Writing

Some students have gotten through high school, and expect to get through college, by writing papers in a single, desperate, last-minute effort. As their assignments become longer and more sophisticated, however, this strategy becomes far less effective. Nevertheless some students retain their belief that they can or should be able to write great papers in a single pass at the last minute.

Discuss the paper-writing process with students, from teasing out an idea via brief writing to outlining to drafting to figuring out what they really want to say. Explain the importance of writing drafts, and ask students to bring a one-page draft of essay assignments with them to office hours or class for feedback. It is not necessary to grade each draft. Show them successive drafts of one of your projects. Often, the requirement of a draft helps students recognize that their ideas take time and effort to develop and that their ideas are worth the investment.

A different unrealistic expectation students may harbor is that they are only allowed to use original ideas — that is, there is no legitimate way to interact with others' ideas in their own academic work. Students who believe this may be tempted to cover up their reliance on other people's work by not acknowledging their debts. As a GSI you can help them understand that in fact they are expected to learn from and discuss the work of other thinkers; they just have to give that work due credit.

Poor, Careless, or Passive Note-Taking

Particularly when writing a research paper, students may inadvertently commit plagiarism because their research notes are not precise enough and don't distinguish the source material from their own thoughts or inferences. Students may lack the habit of using quotation marks or writing down adequate bibliographic information when they take ideas from a book or article. They think they will remember that something is a quotation or remember its origin when they come back to it later, but that information becomes lost. This problem can also occur when a normally careful student works from borrowed notes.

Some students read only receptively and take passive notes. Passive note-taking involves writing down an author's words, or a close paraphrase, without thinking them through. Active note-takers think an idea through, record their own ideas, ask questions, and make connections with other ideas and materials they have come across. This intellectual activity provides a firm basis for developing their own ideas. Active note-takers are less prone to unintentional plagiarism because they record fewer quotations, can identify which ideas belong to which authors, and distinguish those ideas from their own.

Students need to learn how to take useful and efficient notes in their work. Explain the difference between active and passive note-taking and the importance of including quotation marks and essential bibliographic information. Help them understand how active note-taking can improve ideas and save time, since they won't have to go back to original sources again to make sure they got everything straight. Show them some of your own research notes, and talk about what has worked well for you.

It's also extremely helpful to model good note-taking. Always cite your own sources in class and on handouts. Don't photocopy illegally or post copyrighted materials on a website without permission. In class, note the sources you work with on the board — this sets a good example, and it helps students take clearer class notes. (It also sends the message that you are familiar enough with the literature that students are not likely to get away with intentional plagiarism.)

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Preventing Plagiarism

There are several steps you can take as a GSI to minimize the chances of plagiarism among your students.

- Announce the University's plagiarism policy in your section syllabus, and repeat it when you introduce students to a formal paper assignment. A concise statement is on [the Library's page Cite Sources](#) under the heading "What Is Plagiarism?"
- If students have access to the [Turnitin originality check in bCourses](#), have them submit their papers to be reviewed by Turnitin before they turn in their final draft that you will read and grade. The Turnitin tool can help them double-check whether they have inadvertently incorporated the ideas of other writers without proper attribution. Announce that you will also use the Originality Check on the final draft of their papers.
- Show your students what good writing in your discipline looks like. Discuss with them features such as mandatory or standard sections of a paper, what each section is supposed to accomplish within the paper, and ways a good paper uses and credits other writers' material.
- Explain to students that citation of sources allows a widely dispersed academic community to conduct a professional conversation concisely and efficiently, and that being able to use citations effectively is an advantage in a number of professional settings. For an example of a complete strategy, see the Teaching Effectiveness Award essay [Ethical Engagement: Practical Solutions for Addressing Plagiarism in the Writing Classroom](#) by Catherine Cronquist-Browning.
- Show students how to cite sources correctly in your field, and give them a small practice assignment or in-class activity using the citation guide. Have them correct each others' citation formatting using the guide; you can even make a competitive in-class team game of it if this helps motivate students to improve accuracy.
- For a major writing assignment break the process into stages, and give the students some kind of feedback — or at least check off their progress — at each stage. For example, require them to give you their topic in Week 3, a narrower question and framework for answering the question in Week 5, a list of sources they're using in Week 6, a two-page beginning draft in Week 7. In addition, some instructors have students turn in their final draft in hard copy along with their previous drafts and notes.
- Don't permit last-minute changes in topic. Announce this policy early in the process. Announce further that if someone feels their initial topic isn't panning out they will have to iron out an adjustment in consultation with you.
- As the students begin to take notes from other sources, dedicate some classroom time to differentiating quotation, paraphrase, and summary. Talk about when their work calls for each of these and when it doesn't. Talk about how to address other people's ideas and words fairly and usefully within their own writing — that is, how a student can bring someone else's idea into their own discussion of a topic without either appropriating that idea to their own voice or losing their voice in the source's voice. An [article on paraphrasing](#) and an [exercise on the art of paraphrasing](#) appear elsewhere in this chapter of the Teaching Guide.

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The Art of Paraphrasing

Much plagiarism is unintentional, and the most common form of unintentional plagiarism occurs when students try to paraphrase. Many students and GSIs are confused about what constitutes an acceptable or unacceptable paraphrase. For instance, if you explain an author's ideas, omitting some details but retaining characteristic phrases and some of the original order of presentation, are you giving a paraphrase or a summary? If you juggle the order in which the ideas are presented, change the wording, and throw in a few of your own ideas here and there, are you using the original author's ideas as a creative springboard or stealing them? When is an idea "common knowledge"?

Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing

- Quotations reproduce a passage word for word.
- Paraphrases rephrase a passage in one's own words but retain all, or almost all, of the original ideas, structure, etc.
- Summaries also rephrase a passage in one's own words but retain only the main ideas of the original.

Why Use Quotations, Paraphrases, and Summaries?

Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries can all provide useful support for claims that you are making, or can be used to give examples of other points of view, or can provide background information that is relevant to your own ideas. A paraphrase is more appropriate than a quotation in cases where the original author's ideas are more important than the manner in which they are expressed, and where the authority of the author is not an issue. Paraphrases and summaries can also serve a useful pedagogical function: it is only possible to give an accurate paraphrase or summary of an author's ideas if you have a clear understanding of those ideas and the language that the author is using to express them.

The Problem with Paraphrasing

Sometimes a student is not sure when a paraphrase must be credited to the original author and when the ideas constitute common knowledge that need not be credited. In addition, the line between our own ideas and ideas that we have absorbed from other people is often unclear to us. An essential part of the learning process is making intentional the integration of new ideas. We analyze ideas, reformulate them, and integrate them with ideas and beliefs that we already possess. In this way, we make them our own. We must become clear about when we have integrated and reordered an idea sufficiently to make it our own and when it must be credited to the original source.

Much unintentional plagiarism can be prevented by explaining the differences among quotations, paraphrases, and summaries, and giving students a set of guidelines and exercises to help them learn when they need or need not give credit to their source.

Sample Guidelines

Situations in which paraphrases must be credited to the original source include:

- The paraphrase retains all or most of the original author's ideas or uses an idea from the original author that is not common knowledge.
- The paraphrase retains the sequence of the original author's ideas or arrangement of the material or it modifies the sequence of the ideas but retains central ideas and key phrases from the original.

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- The purpose of discussing the author's ideas is to use them as an example of a particular point of view.

An idea is common knowledge if:

- The same idea can be found in the same form in several different sources (and all these sources aren't getting the idea from one common, published source).
- It is information that your readers most likely already possess (whether the information is accurate or a popular misconception).
- It is factual information that is in the public domain, for example, widely known dates of historical events, facts that are cited in standard reference works, etc.

Of course, many students are still developing their sense of authorship, or are still learning those things that others might consider common knowledge. Providing students with examples of common knowledge, correct citations, and the like will help them to get a firmer grasp on these issues.

A sample exercise follows; you might want to select items for your exercise that are salient for your academic field.

Paraphrasing Exercise

An [exercise for distinguishing what fair paraphrasing looks like](#).

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Detecting and Addressing Plagiarism

Pedagogical Approaches to Detecting Plagiarism

If students turn their written assignments in on the bCourses site for your course, you have access to the Turnitin originality check, which compares student submissions with corpora of existing papers and publications (see “Web-Based Detection Software” below).

If submissions are not through bCourses, plagiarism can still be easy to detect in many instances. Here are some common clues:

- Distinctive spelling mistakes or footnotes the student has failed to remove.
- Dramatic changes in the quality of a student’s work from one assignment to the next or in different parts of the same assignment.
- Sudden changes in style, grammar, sentence sophistication, or spelling.
- Work that is off topic.
- Use of old or outdated quotations or facts. This is particularly common in papers bought from paper mills.
- Footnotes that refer to material the student is unlikely to have heard of, that make extensive use of a language the student probably does not know, or that make reference to “previous chapters,” “other articles,” etc.
- Papers with sections in different fonts, font sizes, or formats.
- Papers whose argument or presentation seems piecemeal, which may have been cobbled together from multiple unacknowledged sources.
- Last-minute requests to write on a different assignment or topic.

If plagiarism is suspected, another strategy is to ask other GSIs teaching the same course, or the faculty member, if any of the material in the paper looks familiar. GSIs will be able to identify material if another student has submitted the same paper to them, and the faculty member may be familiar enough with the secondary literature to recognize a borrowing that you might not.

It is often possible to locate the source of plagiarized material by simply copying and pasting passages from the paper into a search engine. You can do a simple search by enclosing the material in quotation marks

(“ ”), or by using the advanced search feature that allows you to locate an exact phrase.

However, many sources from which students might plagiarize do not appear in a routine web search.

Web-Based Detection Software

UC Berkeley has a campus license to use Turnitin to check the originality of students’ papers, and for generating feedback to students about their integration of written sources into their papers. The tool is available in bCourses as an add-on to the Grading tool, and in the Assignments tool SpeedGrader.

GSIs should look to the faculty member in charge of their course for guidance on using Turnitin and responding to the results it produces.

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GSIs planning to use Turnitin should attend a workshop with Educational Technology Services (ETS) to learn in detail how it works, its best uses, and its limitations. More detailed information and the workshop schedule can be found on the [Educational Technology Services](#) website.

Still a Pedagogical Matter

The use of web-based detection does not mean that plagiarism is now merely an enforcement or technical issue. Plagiarism detection systems such as Turnitin's originality check compare students' papers against an enormous database of student papers and against the published sources to which the system has access; an instructor will still have to analyze whatever matches the report identifies to determine whether any particular borrowing constitutes plagiarism. An instructor will also have to decide how to discuss the matter with students.

Students can learn more on their own about their use of other writers' materials with Turnitin's originality check. They can submit drafts of their papers to double-check whether they have inadvertently incorporated ideas of other writers without proper attribution, then correct their work before submitting their final draft.

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If You Encounter Academic Misconduct

[Gathering Information about the Incident](#)
[Reporting the Incident to the Center for Student Conduct](#)
[The Conduct Process](#)
[Protecting the Student](#)

Gathering Information about the Incident

The following are steps to take if you suspect a student has committed academic misconduct according to the campus's definitions:

- Document your reasons for concluding that an act of misconduct occurred (the evidence).
- Consult with the Instructor of Record. The Instructor of Record may want to manage the issue personally; although the Instructor of Record may choose to delegate further steps to the GSI, the Instructor of Record is officially responsible to address the possible misconduct.
- The Instructor of Record may decide to impose a proportionate sanction for the infraction — for example, for a small plagiarism infraction, have the student resubmit an assignment for reduced credit; for a more serious infraction, receive reduced credit or a zero on an exam or paper; or for an egregious infraction, receive a reduced final grade or failing grade in the course.
- The Instructor of Record or the GSI should download the [Faculty Disposition for Academic Dishonesty form \(pdf\)](#). The form is very brief and straightforward.
- Either the GSI or the Instructor of Record or both should speak with the student to help the student understand the charge and to get a sense of the student's perspective. Avoid inflammatory terms such as "cheat" or "theft." Show the student the evidence and the Code of Conduct section that was violated, and give the student an opportunity to agree or disagree with the allegation. Discuss any sanctions that the instructor will impose.
- Sometimes an instructor may prefer not to deal with the student directly. In that case, the instructor can collect the documentation and send it to the Center for Student Conduct, and the Center for Student Conduct will take responsibility to conduct an investigation and work with the student.
- If the instructor resolves the matter directly with the student (the student takes responsibility for the violation and accepts the sanction), then the faculty member indicates the academic sanction on the Faculty Disposition form, and the faculty member and student both sign the form. The next step is to report the matter to the Center for Student Conduct.

Reporting the Incident to the Center for Student Conduct

Reporting to the Center for Student Conduct involves filling out and submitting an online [Incident Report](#). The report form will ask for details about the incident and uploading of the [Faculty Disposition for Academic Dishonesty form \(pdf\)](#), along with the evidence of the violation. Whether the student has signed the Faculty Disposition form or not, it is to be sent to the Center for Student Conduct along with the Incident Report.

If the instructor chooses not to deal with the student directly, or if the student does not accept the allegation of academic misconduct, the Incident Report should still be filed with the Center for Student Conduct. The Center for Student Conduct may then carry out an investigation and speak with the student.

Teaching Guide for GSIs

It is important for instructors to report cases of academic misconduct to the Center for Student Conduct.

- The Center for Student Conduct helps educate students about the function and value of academic integrity.
- The Center for Student Conduct serves as the central recordkeeping site on campus for reports of student academic misconduct. The purpose of this central recordkeeping system is to flag any future violations of the Code of Student Conduct by the same student. It can also serve as a check against a student engaging in dishonest activities in different departments.

If instructors are not sure about filing a report, or what information to include, they are encouraged to contact the Center for Student Conduct to discuss the conduct process and available options.

Sometimes instructors are reluctant to report incidents of academic misconduct because they are concerned about entering something negative on a student's permanent record or transcript. The conduct process makes such an entry as a result of a single academic violation unlikely.

The Conduct Process

The student may be issued a "non-reportable warning" notifying them that any future violations will result in more serious sanctions. The warning is non-reportable in the sense that although Student Conduct keeps track of the violation, it does not create a conduct record for the student based on a single violation.

For more serious violations, or for repeat non-egregious violations, Student Conduct issues a "reportable warning," which means that the student now has a conduct record. The Center for Student Conduct may impose other sanctions appropriate to the violations, detailed in Section VI of the Code of Conduct.

A conduct record is not the transcript of the student's grades. Violations of the code of conduct are not entered on the student's official university transcript unless at some point the student is suspended or dismissed from the university for other violations.

Incident reports and notes become part of the student record (which includes all information the university keeps about a student); students have a right to see the contents of their record and to request changes to their record, including expunging of information.

Protecting the Student

Students charged with violations of the UC Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct have rights and procedural protections throughout the process. These include notice of the charges, presumption of innocence, choosing not to participate, hearing, appeal, and an advisor. They also remain protected by the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which requires instructors and all University employees to keep their records — including a disposition for academic misconduct — private and confidential. You may only reveal the student's identity and the circumstances surrounding the misconduct with other University officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the matter.

Further information is available at the [Center for Student Conduct website](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/academic-misconduct-intro/).

Teaching Guide for GSIs

Student Academic Misconduct: References and Resources

References Used in This Section

[Center for Student Conduct](#)
[GSI Professional Standards and Ethics Online Course, Module 4](#)
[Teaching Effectiveness Awards, GSI Teaching & Resource Center](#)
[Campus Policy on Course Note-Taking and Materials](#)

Resources for GSIs

Faculty Members

GSIs should consult with the faculty member in charge of a course (Instructor of Record) about possible cases of academic misconduct in their course.

The [Faculty Adviser for GSI Affairs](#) in the GSI's teaching department is available for consultation on matters of policy and regulations.

[Center for Student Conduct](#)

221 Sproul Hall

510-643-9069 or studentconduct@berkeley.edu

A major mission of the Center for Student Conduct is to help educate the campus community, including instructional officers such as GSIs, about the behavioral expectations UC Berkeley holds for its students. You can consult with their conduct officers to clarify issues around possible student academic misconduct. This office also administers the process outlined in the Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct when they receive allegations of student academic misconduct. Their website offers access to several resources for faculty members and GSIs as well as for students.

Davis, Barbara Gross (2009). "Preventing Academic Dishonesty." *Tools for Teaching*, Second Edition. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass). Available in the GSI Teaching & Resource Center library, 301 Sproul Hall.

[GSI Teaching & Resource Center](#)

301 Sproul Hall

510-642-4456 or gsi@berkeley.edu

The GSI Teaching & Resource Center provides confidential consultations and other resources for GSIs.

Resources for Students

[Center for Student Conduct](#)

221 Sproul Hall

510-643-9069 or studentconduct@berkeley.edu

[Definitions and Examples of Academic Misconduct](#)

[Maintaining Your Integrity and Ensuring Success](#)

[Addressing Academic Misconduct](#)

[Student Advocate's Office: Conduct](#)

510-642-6912 or help@berkeleysao.org

The Student Advocate's Office helps students with University-related problems concerning admissions, dismissals and transfers; financial aid problems; sexual harassment; student conduct; grade disputes; procedural problems; and UC housing or employment.

204 Eshleman Hall

UC Berkeley Library

[Cite Sources](#)