

Indiana University

Academic Integrity in Graduate Study: A Graduate School Guide

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Introduction

Integrity in scholarly work has received considerable attention in recent years, both in academic circles and the news. Some notorious fraud cases have made those in higher education sensitive to this issue. Some cases, especially in the sciences, have surfaced when attempts to replicate work have failed. In the humanities and social sciences, plagiarism assumes greater prominence. Cheating, the bane of many high school and undergraduate teachers, also arises at the graduate level. Moreover, in our ever more complex professional world, graduate students may be embroiled in abuses of confidentiality or conflicts of interest. These problems are of significant concern to graduate students, faculty, and other graduate educators.

Although many graduate students will have few problems with the ethical decisions involved in maintaining integrity in their work, others may need to see the issues more clearly. Some very few may even be unaware of the potential for problems with integrity in graduate study. Therefore, the University Graduate School has created this document that outlines guidelines for:

- A) academic misconduct.
- B) professionalism and abuses of confidentiality.
- C) fraud.
- D) plagiarism.
- E) Cheating; and
- F) conflicts of interest.

Resources

[NIH Fraud, Waste and Abuse of NIH Grant Funding](#)
[Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct](#)
[Academic Integrity: IU Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

A. Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes any activity that tends to undermine the academic integrity of the institution. It may involve human, hard-copy, or electronic resources. Examples include cheating,

fabrication, plagiarism, interference, violation of course rules, and the facilitation of academic dishonesty. It is the responsibility of all faculty members to report all cases of academic misconduct to the Dean of Students or appropriate official.

As per the [IU Academic Misconduct Policy](#), “Indiana University procedures for imposing academic and disciplinary sanctions are intended to provide students with a non-discriminatory, fair and consistent process. At the same time, the procedures reflect concern about the individual student involved in a particular case. The procedures, therefore, provide that the imposition of disciplinary sanctions should take into consideration the circumstances and evidence in a particular case, including a student's prior record of misconduct, if any. Policies of academic misconduct apply to all courses, Department, School, Campus, and University related activities, including field trips, conferences, performances, and sports activities off campus, exams outside of a specific course structure (such as take home exams, entrance exams, or auditions, theses and master's exams, and doctoral qualifying exams and dissertations), and research work outside of a specific course structure (such as lab experiments, data collection, service learning, and collaborative research projects). The faculty member may consider the seriousness of the violation in assessing a sanction(s) for acts of academic misconduct. The faculty member must report all cases of academic misconduct to the School, Division, or Unit Academic Officer.”

It is recommended that all graduate students complete the [IU Expand Online Academic Integrity Course](#) during the first semester of their studies. This course will allow students to recognize academic misconduct, identify the different types of academic misconduct, and explain the consequences of academic misconduct.

Resources

[IUPUI Academic Misconduct](#)

[IU Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

[IU: Reporting Academic Misconduct](#)

[IU Expand Online Academic Integrity Course](#)

B. Professionalism and Abuses of Confidentiality

Students must respect their peers and other professionals in person and online. Furthermore, the IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct protects the rights of all IU students. Students are entitled to respect and civility and remain responsible to the campus community. The Code outlines these responsibilities and the university's expectations for the professionalism of all IU students. An essential component of professionalism centers on collaborating with other students, fairly attributing their contributions, respecting the options of others, and notifying professors or supervisors immediately if any issues may constitute academic dishonesty.

Abuses of confidentiality by graduate students can take various forms. Students may have access to thesis and grant proposals, data, or unpublished papers of other graduate students or faculty members. Some students use this privileged material in their own research without permission, even though proper attribution may be made. Such an abuse of confidentiality would include adapting to one's research of a thesis or dissertation or any unpublished work. It may also involve adopting ideas first developed, but still need to be relinquished by someone else. A graduate student may demonstrate an abuse of confidentiality when archival or library materials about living or recently living subjects are used without permission from

the library, archive, or, in some cases, from an individual. Any research on live subjects can present similar dilemmas.

Resources

[IU Rights in the Pursuit of Education](#)

[IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, & Conduct](#)

C. Fraud

What is fraud? Fraud typically involves intentionally and deliberately misusing data to draw unwarranted conclusions. Falsification of results may take on several forms, including (1) fabrication of data; (2) omission or concealment of conflicting data that results in misleading other scholars; (3) data manipulation using technology or other means; as well as (4) misrepresentation of the work of others in or outside the field of study. An intermediate form of misconduct that can be difficult to detect, especially in quantitative analyses, occurs when students are categorizing and accurately entering data. Generally, the best researchers come to terms with and acknowledge any evidence others may regard as conflicting.

How can a student avoid fraud? Graduate students are encouraged to attend seminars on research ethics and to enroll in formal courses on the responsible conduct of research. Faculty advisors should provide an environment for open discussions with close research supervision within a department or graduate program of best practices in research and data analysis with students and acknowledge the examples of other academic community members to provide in vetting hypotheses, results, and information. A student should communicate regularly and frequently with their faculty advisor. Examples of supervision and dialogue may include:

1. Submitting laboratory notebooks and electronic files for frequent faculty review.
2. Discuss the literature and data in the field.
3. Provide the faculty advisor with regular progress reports of experiments and data.
4. Submission of regular updates to the research team, including the faculty advisor and any collaborator members of the research teams, to review data and experiments.

What can a student expect from a faculty member to avoid fraud? First, students should expect regular communication with the faculty advisor. In the absence of faculty initiative and communication, graduate students should instigate dialogues with faculty. Such communication will help the student develop intellectually and lessen the possibility of fraud. Regular discussion of responsible research practices is encouraged in the classroom and research spaces.

What may happen if fraud occurs? A student suspected of fraud should be handled forthrightly with apparent regard to the rights of the graduate student. Handling cases of fraud is important to protect innocent student researchers' current and future careers. Similarly, if graduate-student fraud is verified, it must be decided following established University procedures. Finally, if students are inadvertently involved in misconduct due to fraud by another individual, the department or program will work to minimize any negative impact on the individuals involved. The Graduate School will provide information on those procedures to any interested party.

Resources

[IU Research misconduct: Register Complaints or Inquiries](#)

D. Plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

What is plagiarism? Students commit plagiarism by using another's words, ideas, or creative productions or omitting pertinent materials without proper attribution. Flagrant plagiarism may involve extensive borrowing of others' material from articles, books, or creative productions with only slight modifications. In such cases, penalties are usually severe for the student and would result in expulsion from a program or rescinding a degree. Less severe cases, intentional or unintentional (carelessness or ignorance of the commonly accepted rules), may also trigger significant repercussions.

How can I avoid plagiarism? Students must cite the work of others in the text or footnotes, and they must use direct quotations or skillful paraphrasing for all ideas of others. However, much of the basic information about a discipline comes from various sources familiar to all. Hence, it is unnecessary to footnote facts and ideas in the discipline's common domain. An intimate familiarity with relevant literature lets one know when to attribute distinctive words or ideas of another researcher.

What are some examples of plagiarism? Every graduate student should have a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes plagiarism. Ignorance of the concept of plagiarism on the student's part is no excuse. Students with questions or doubts about what constitutes plagiarism should contact faculty members, staff, or administrators for advice. Students should expect faculty members to understand what constitutes plagiarism. Several less-obvious forms of plagiarism may arise. These include:

1. Misrepresent an author's meaning while quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing material.
2. Overdependence on another individual's work, even when cited meticulously.
3. Use of *artificial intelligence* (machine-produced text, such as ChatGPT) programs to generate text almost indistinguishable from human writing.
4. Plagiarize oneself by submitting the same data or findings in more than one article or reviewing the same book in two different journals.
5. When a graduate student's experimental results/findings are used by their mentor without proper attribution and credit.

The student should discuss any perceived problem of plagiarism with the faculty member involved, and if necessary, the department chair. Consultation with a faculty advisor and other members of the academic community may prevent instances of plagiarism. Faculty should handle any suspicion of plagiarism regarding the student's rights. Detection of plagiarism should be determined following established University procedures. Faculty mentors should provide guidance on the appropriate use of AI language models as a tool for assisting with the research process. Given the emergence of artificial intelligence in education it is important to have discussions with students to help them understand the potential consequences of using AI, and under what circumstances the use of platforms such as ChatGPT are appropriate.

Resources

[IU Plagiarism Certificate](#)

[IU Academic Misconduct](#)

[IU: What is Plagiarism?](#)

[How to Productively Address AI-Generated Text in Your Classroom: IU Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

E. Cheating

[The IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conducts](#) indicates: “Cheating is considered to be an attempt to use or provide unauthorized assistance, materials, information, or study aids in any form and in any academic exercise or environment.” The Student Code for Academic Misconduct [academic misconduct](#) broadly covers all activities of graduate students, including qualifying and preliminary examinations. Faculty must consider the offense and report cheating. Instances of cheating on exams should be reported to Directors of Graduate Programs and may lead to failure of the exam or dismissal from the Program.

Dishonesty related to examinations, dissertation or thesis should be reported to the student’s research advisory committee and notification of the Graduate Program Director. The Research Committee may determine that students could move forward with their dissertation or thesis if cheating-related issues are sufficiently addressed. However, using technological tools such as artificial intelligence by graduate students may be considered cheating. Therefore, students should discuss with their faculty mentor how they are able to use such tools to write original documents, such as a thesis, a dissertation, examinations (of any kind), essays, original research articles, or reviews (Refer to Section D above). Exceptions may only include endorsement of such tools (by faculty or Committees) based on the relevance to a student’s research and scholarship.

F. Conflicts of Interest

Per the IU University Policies: “It is the policy of Indiana University that its academic appointees and employees conduct the affairs of the university in accordance with the highest legal, ethical, and moral standards. Indiana University academic appointees and employees are expected to:

1. Adhere to the [Principles of Ethical Conduct](#), including the stated principles governing conflicts of interest and commitment.
2. Prevent individual or institutional conflicts of commitment in their assigned duties for the university.
3. Disclose potential conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment and adhere to any requirements created to manage or eliminate those conflicts.
4. Ensure personal relationships do not interfere with objective judgment in decisions affecting university employment or the academic progress of a community member or a student.
5. Ensure their assigned duties for the university receive their full effort, attention, and commitment.
6. Use all university property, including equipment, finances, materials, electronic and other systems, information, and other university resources only for legitimate university purposes and in accordance with university policies.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to permit any activity that is prohibited by law, even if an actual or potential conflict of interest has been disclosed.”

Credit for authorship/inventorship [UA-17: Conflicts of Interest and Commitment](#): Conflicts between graduate students and faculty members may arise. We have already alluded to problems that can occur when a graduate student's research needs to be more adequately acknowledged by faculty, either by failure to cite appropriately or to give co-authorship credit. However, another set of professional interpersonal relationships must be handled with care if the integrity of graduate study is to be preserved. As continuing formal education becomes more common and academics become involved in business, the possibility of a business relationship between student and teacher becomes greater.

Nepotism [UA-17: Conflicts of Interest and Commitment](#) Nepotism is the supervision or influence over an academic appointee or employee by another university academic appointee or employee with whom they have a familial or personal relationship, as defined in this policy. Influence in the employment situation may concern issues such as hiring, promotion, supervision, evaluation, determination of salary, or working conditions. Academic appointees or employees with familial or personal relationships should not be appointed or transferred to a position that creates a potential situation of nepotism without an approved management plan to avoid instances of supervision or influence. Potential nepotism situations must be reported prior to appointment or transfer, according to the procedures below. Situations of nepotism that arise in existing employment situations due to a change in relationship, must be reported promptly and addressed by an approved management plan.

Relationships [UA-17: Conflicts of Interest and Commitment](#): A student (undergraduate or graduate) should not date a faculty/instructor while the student is enrolled in their course. Furthermore, students should not ask any faculty/instructor to serve as their thesis or dissertation director (or research committee member) if the student is having or has had either an intimate personal relationship, a family relationship, or a business relationship with that faculty/instructor. If a relationship should develop after a professional one has been established, the student should expect the faculty/instructor to remove himself or herself from the professional role. Otherwise, such a relationship constitutes a potential conflict of interest, especially as perceived by other students and faculty members, and should be scrupulously avoided.

References

[IU Conflicts of Interest Policy and Procedures](#)

[IU Nepotism procedures](#)

[IU Research Conflicts of Interest](#)