

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ETHICS: ISSUES, GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Academic integrity and ethics are crucial for maintaining public trust in the academic community's ability to carry out its roles of teaching, research and service. This paper addresses issues of integrity and ethics in these three areas of the academic life. Ethical issues in teaching include responsibility in instruction, respect for students and fairness in grading. In its primary role of teaching, it is shown to be necessary for the university to educate students and staff on good character traits and train them to recognize and avoid cheating and plagiarism. Ethical issues relating to research include fraud in data gathering, storage and retrieval and supervision of research personnel. Ethical issues in publication, a public service, relate more to issues of attribution of credit, plagiarism and co-authorship. It is, therefore, proposed that OAU develop a code of academic integrity and ethics for all staff and students. This is done by developing guidelines and structures to reinforce academic integrity and ethics. The basis, significance, features and enforcement of the code are outlined. The similarities and differences between code of conduct and code of ethics are underscored

while the causes and treatment of academic misconduct and ethical violations are discussed.

Key words: Academic integrity, Code of conduct, Ethics, Ethical issues

1 This is the title of a presentation by the author at a Distinguished Faculty Lecture Series, Faculty of Agriculture, OAU, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, on the 4th of December, 2012

1. Introduction

Materials in this section benefitted from: <http://gradschool.unc.edu/academics/resources/ethics.html#issues> and http://www.ehow.com/about_6332269_student-code-ethics.html

"You know it's not the positions held, the honours and the prizes and the fancy outward material signs of success which ultimately nourish our souls. It's knowing that we can be trusted, that we never have to fear the truth, that integrity is the bedrock of our being." — adapted from Fred "Mr. Rogers" Rogers.

As an emerging researcher, the questions you ask and the answers you find will lead you and your colleagues into uncharted waters of knowledge. With intellectual discovery and collaboration come new responsibilities. In conducting and then disseminating the results of your research, you will be accountable both to your colleagues and to the public. This discussion is intended to help you navigate the complex moral situations that you will encounter in the academic setting.

Truth is the foundation of scholarship at the University. Innovation can continue only in an atmosphere of confidence and fairness. You must be able to trust that your colleagues are honest in presenting their research, and they must have the same trust in your work. The range of research subjects and methods, along with systems of analysis and data presentation that guide each field, give rise to situations of great moral complexity. Likewise, relationships between teachers and students, along with great opportunity, carry important responsibilities and obligations. Students will strengthen the foundation of trust within the University by gaining knowledge of their fields and committing themselves to cultivating trusting and courteous relationships.

Academic integrity is essential not only for progress within the academy, but also for maintaining the trust granted by the federal government (through the Governing Council), the people of the nation, and the world. The independence and reputation of the University rest in the hands of those who are scrupulous in their search for truth. This responsibility is now yours.

2. Issues in Student Ethics Character

Character has become an invaluable component in education in the 21st century. Prominent scandals in governance, business and social relationships centering on ethics have become

all too frequent that the educational system must return to focusing on building character in students from primary to tertiary schools. It is now necessary for university classes to educate students on character and incorporate teaching of ethical principles in the midst of technical content.

Cheating

Cheating is pervasive in education, especially as students enter secondary school and University. Feeling the pressure of meeting personal and family expectations, students sometimes succumb to the temptation to cheat to get ahead. The Obafemi Awolowo University regularly rusticates people found of certificate fraud or cheating in Examinations. Hala Khalaf reported in December 2010 that 34 students have been expelled at Abu Dhabi University since the school implemented its "campaign on academic integrity" in April 2009. Teachers have a responsibility to enforce academic guidelines and structure to reinforce academic honesty and integrity among students.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is another common ethical issue for students. Indiana University's Writing Tutorial Services department defines plagiarism as "using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information." In its overview of plagiarism, Indiana University points out that the issue for students is often lack of awareness of proper citation within papers. This places responsibility on instructors to educate students on appropriate citation when submitting reports. Resources are available that allow teachers to test reports with programmes that check for plagiarism.

3. Ethical Issues for Academics Issues in Research

a) Fraud

There has been a good deal of concern in the National Universities Commission (Nigeria), among grant funding agencies including our internal University Research Committee, and

among the general public about “fraud in research.” Clearly it is important for the University as well as for the individual not just to know how to deal with fraud in research when it has occurred but—perhaps more importantly—to prevent such fraud from occurring in the first place. In fact, we should comport ourselves in such a way that even the suspicion of fraud is unlikely to arise and, if it does arise unjustly, we have the records in hand to prove that the allegation was misplaced. Therefore we are going to look at guidelines relating to Data Gathering, Storage and Retention, to Publication Practices and Authorship and to Supervision of Research Personnel.

The most important ingredients in avoiding fraud are the integrity and high ethical standards of the research project leader. If the project leader cuts corners and is more concerned with publication or research grant renewal than with a life-long reputation and the integrity of the research, these guidelines are not likely to be of much help. The guidelines assist only those who are determined to maintain high standards in their research careers.

b) Data Gathering, Storage, Retention

A common denominator in most cases of alleged scientific misconduct has been the absence of a complete set of verifiable data. The retention of accurately recorded and retrievable results is of the utmost importance for the progress of scientific inquiry. A scientist must have access to his/her original results in order to respond to questions including, but not limited to, those that may arise without any implication of impropriety. Moreover, errors may be mistaken for misconduct when the primary experimental results are unavailable.

Recommendations:

- Original research results should be promptly recorded, and should be kept in as organized and accessible a fashion as possible.

- The research project leader should retain the raw research data pertinent to publication for a reasonable period of time (normally five years) after publication. In no instance should primary data be destroyed while questions may be raised which are answerable only by reference to such data.
- Documentation of required approvals (e.g. of the Human Rights and Animal Use Committee where pertinent) should be retained in the research project leader’s files for a period of five years.

c) Supervision of Research Personnel

Careful supervision of all research personnel by their research project leaders is in the best interest of the trainee, the institution, and the scientific community. The complexity of scientific methods, the necessity for caution in interpreting possibly ambiguous data, and the need for advanced statistical analysis, all require an active role for the research project leader in the guidance of research personnel.

Recommendations:

- All research personnel, such as technicians, graduate students, and postdoctoral trainees, should be specifically supervised by a designated research project leader.
- The ratio of research personnel to project leaders should be small enough that close interaction is possible for scientific interchange as well as oversight of the research at all stages.
- The project leader should supervise the design of experiments and the process of acquiring, sorting, examining, recording and interpreting data. (A project leader who limits his/her role to the editing of manuscripts does not provide adequate supervision.)
- Discussions among project leaders and research personnel constituting a research unit (i.e. departmental seminar series) should be held regularly, both to

contribute to the scientific efforts of the members of the group and to provide informal peer review of research results.

- The project leader or supervisor should provide each investigator (whether student, postdoctoral fellow or other research personnel) with applicable governmental and institutional requirements for conduct of studies involving healthy volunteers or patients, animals, radioactive or other hazardous substances, and recombinant DNA.

Issues in Authorship

A gradual diffusion of responsibility for multi-authored or collaborative studies has led in recent years to the publication of papers for which no single author was prepared to take full responsibility. Two critical safeguards in the publication of accurate scientific reports are the active participation of each co-author in verifying that part of a manuscript that falls within his/her specialty area and the designation of one author who is responsible for the validity of the entire manuscript.

Recommendations:

- An author submitting a paper should never include the name of a co-author without that person's consent. Each co-author should be furnished with a copy of the manuscript before it is submitted. Co-authorship should be offered to (and limited to) one who has clearly made a significant contribution to the work.
- Anyone accepting co-authorship of a paper should realize that this action implies a responsibility as well as a privilege. If a potential co-author has serious reservations concerning a publication the individual should decline co-authorship.
- The senior author or authors of a paper, individually or in concert, should be prepared to identify the contributions of each co-author.
- Simultaneous submission of essentially

identical manuscripts to different journals is improper.

- As a general principle, research should be published in the scientific literature before reports of such research are released to the public press.

Issues of Attribution

Scholarly research and writing requires a delicate weaving of your ideas with the ideas, research, and methods of other scholars. As isolating (and private) an act as scholarship might feel, after long, lonely hours in a library or a laboratory, scholarship is accomplished within a community of scholars, whether or not you ever meet the people upon whose ideas you build your own. Scholars must rely responsibly on the work of others. Therefore, it is important that you know what constitutes appropriate attribution of source material (i.e. citation) when you write and conduct research. These issues become particularly important when attributing credit for work and authorship in scholarship conducted collaboratively. Do not hesitate to contact your supervisor, mentor or senior for guidance.

Plagiarism

It is important to know exactly what plagiarism is in order to avoid it in your work. Several examples of plagiarism may make the concepts clearer.

Plagiarism is defined as the "intentional representation of another person's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own." Plagiarism is wrong, and should not be condoned. Cases of plagiarism strongly affect the University community. The normal sanction for plagiarism is suspension of the student from the University. For graduate students who should be assigned a failing grade because of documented plagiarism, the result is expulsion from their program and the end of their graduate career at the University.

Independent thought is encouraged in graduate

education, but mature scholarship requires that one person's ideas be built with the help of other scholars and researchers. In the academy it is expected that all "borrowed" material will be appropriately credited to the originator of the thoughts, ideas, and words.

Any amount of material copied from an unacknowledged source, no matter how small, can be considered plagiarism. Ignorance of citation procedures is not an excuse for plagiarism. At the graduate level, it is assumed that all students know the rules of citation and quotation. It is not enough to list a source in the bibliography without proper citation of the material in the body of a text. If you are unsure of the rules of citation and attribution, talk with your supervisor or consult any of the style and writing manuals.

One practice that may lead to unintentional plagiarism is careless note taking, but even here, there is no excuse. Take good and thorough notes when reviewing literature or recording data; record exact sources and citations, including page numbers. Students often will forget if a sentence or passage is something they wrote or if it was taken from another source.

The following are examples of plagiarism:

Quoting Directly without Proper Acknowledgment

In this example, the student made changes to the first part of the sentence, then copied directly from the source. All material borrowed from another source must be placed in quotation marks. Quoted material longer than three sentences should be indented without quotation marks.

Source

"For decades, student athletes, usually seventeen-to-nineteen-year-old freshmen, have informally agreed to contract with the university to attend athletic performance in exchange for an education. The athletes have kept their part of the bargain; the universities

have not. Universities and athletic departments have gained huge gate receipts, television revenues, national visibility, donors to university programs, and more, as a result of the performances of gifted basketball and football players, of whom a disproportionate number of the most gifted and most exploited have been black.

From Harry Edwards (1983), "Educating Black Athletes", *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1983.

From the plagiarist's paper

"For years, young student athletes have virtually signed four years of their lives away to compete for a university in exchange for a college degree. The athletes have kept their part of the bargain; the universities have not. Universities and athletic departments have gained huge gate receipts, television revenues, national visibility, donors to university programs, and more, as a result of the performances of gifted basketball and football players, of whom a disproportionate number of the most gifted and most exploited have been black".

Paraphrasing

In the passages that follow, the student has recorded the source by substituting words and changing sentences, but keeps the ideas and thoughts of the source. Although the student has reworded the sentences or passage extensively, the author still must be acknowledged. When used properly, paraphrasing can be a valuable tool for summarizing the author's ideas into your own thoughts. When paraphrasing, if most of the ideas are coming from the source, you must include an appropriate citation to the original author. Paraphrasing, without proper citation, is plagiarism.

Source

"For decades, student athletes, usually seventeen-to-nineteen-year-old freshmen, have informally agreed to contract with the university to attend athletic performance in

exchange for an education. The athletes have kept their part of the bargain; the universities have not. Universities and athletic departments have gained huge gate receipts, television revenues, national visibility, donors to university programs, and more, as a result of the performances of gifted basketball and football players, of whom a disproportionate number of the most gifted and most exploited have been black”.

From Harry Edwards (1983), “Educating Black Athletes”, *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1983.

Paraphrase

“Generations of athletes entering colleges and universities across the country have signed a contract with the university to compete in sports, giving their athletic services in exchange for room, board, tuition, and a college degree.

The athletes have kept their part of the bargain by dedicating themselves to the university for four years; the universities have not, with eight out of ten (of the athletes) leaving the university without a college degree.

The sports programs at these universities have profited tremendously from the talent of football and basketball players, of whom, blacks tend to be over represented. The dramatic increase in the proportion of black college athletes has paralleled college sports’ ability to attract television revenues, huge gate receipts, and national visibility”.

Plagiarism can be easily avoided by consulting any of the many writing manuals. There are many different ways to note a source. The most widely used is the University of Chicago Manual of Style, favoured in the traditional humanities. The economy of citation used by the Modern Language Association (MLA) also is widely accepted. The following style and writing manuals are the most common and may be found in most good libraries:

- The Chicago Manual of Style (16th edition or online version)

- MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers
- Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th edition)
- C.B.E. Style Manual (5th edition): a guide for authors, editors, and publishers in the biological sciences.
- Electronic Style: A Guide to Citing Electronic Information

The secret to using sources productively is to use them to support and develop your own ideas. If you find that too much of your paper is coming from the source, start over. If you have doubts about how to cite material, consult your instructor to see which method is preferred in your department or field.

Issues in Teaching

Good teaching requires that you both act responsibly and teach your students how to act responsibly.

Being a Responsible Teacher

There are a number of ethical issues of which you should be aware when teaching. These include, but are not limited to, confidentiality, racial and sexual harassment, favoritism, exploitation, and conflict of interest. It is crucial that you have an attitude of respect toward your students and that you uphold their right to a fair and impartial classroom environment. If you are unsure about what is required of you, consult the Course coordinator or the Head of your department.

Grading

Ethical grading should be a prevalent topic in the university. Academic staff have very differing perspectives on what is ethical and what is not with regard to grading. Points of dissension include the necessity of upfront communication to students on tests and quizzes and the breakdown of weighted grading criteria, including the percentage of weight assigned to homework and tests

Teaching Responsible Conduct

In acting respectfully toward your students, you will be teaching them about proper academic behavior. You also have a responsibility to promote and enforce the Honor Code in your classroom. The way in which you do this will depend, of course, on your teaching situation; however, there are some general strategies that you can implement.

- Talk about your expectations. Be explicit about what they need to cite when writing a paper and the extent to which they can use notes or work with other people on their assignments.
- When writing a syllabus, include a section on the Honor Code and how it applies to the course you are teaching. You may be able to get ideas about how to do this from lecturers or other graduate students in your department.
- If you suspect that an Honor Code violation has occurred, you have a responsibility to report it to the Dean of Student Affairs.

4. Academic Code of Ethics

Materials for this section were obtained from Katlyn Joy (2012).

An academic code of ethics is a standard of behavior on campuses that students and faculty enter into together. Typically a code of ethics encompasses academic honesty in various settings and situations--from taking tests to writing papers to representing one's work. Violating the code of ethics has serious repercussions at most institutions.

Significance

An academic code provides a framework for guiding ethical and moral behavior at the campus among faculty, staff and students. Having a written code that spells out the boundaries of morality and the goals for integrity among the campus population also has a unifying effect. Knowing the type of character

and moral development that is expected of the community creates a type of organizational or campus ideal.

Authority and Enforcement

At many institutions the academic code of ethics must be read and signed by everyone in the university community, students, administrators and academic staff. To sign the document is to agree to uphold the code of ethics.

Often within the code of ethics is a section regarding how the code will be upheld and enforced. A section on how those who violate the code will be dealt with may be included as well.

Identification

Most academic codes of ethics have a preamble. This section sets a tone and expresses the overall purpose of the code. The preamble may also define the moral goal for the university community as well.

For instance, the preamble for Howard University begins with the assertion: "Howard University affirms that the central purpose of a university is the pursuit of truth, the discovery of new knowledge through scholarly research, the teaching and overall development of students, and the transmission of knowledge and learning to the world at large."

In this way a preamble identifies the goals for the institution and the campus community.

Features

Following a preamble, most codes of ethics detail actions considered academic dishonesty, including cheating, copying, plagiarism, misrepresentation and not giving proper credit. Many codes also cover other violations, such as vandalism, theft or inappropriate or unauthorized uses of school property.

They may detail behavior such as drinking, illegal substance use, gambling and sexual behaviors--especially harassment or inappropriate behaviors.

Some codes of ethics detail personal responsibility issues, such as treating others in the community with respect and not lying or committing fraud against the institution or another student or campus member.

Considerations

Once an academic code of ethics has been violated, some procedure for enforcing the code has to be enacted.

The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania has a section on the Ethics Committee, how it convenes for charges of violation, the rights of the accused, the appeals process and disciplinary system of the school.

Without any guidelines on what to do in the case of infractions, the code of ethics is merely an ideal for the academic community

5. Difference Between Code of Ethics & Code of Conduct

Materials from this section from Tom King (2012).

Codes of ethics and codes of conduct are often confused.

The difference between a code of ethics and a code of conduct is often blurred in day to day usage, but there is a difference. Codes of conduct are derived from codes of ethics whether the ethical code is a written code or unwritten and understood by members of the organization developing the code.

Codes of Ethics

An ethical code in its formal sense is an attempt by an organization to codify the values of the group -- a statement of overarching principle telling members what is right and what is wrong as a guide to all decision making within the

organization. Codes of ethics set out general principles, often social or moral, that guide rather than dictate behavior.

Codes of Conduct

Codes of conduct are specific rules designed to outline specific practices and behaviors that are to be encouraged or prohibited under the ethical code of an organization or individual. Codes of conduct lay out guidelines and procedure to be used to determine whether violations of the code of ethics have occurred and delineate the consequences for such violations. Conduct codes govern things like conflicts of interest or acceptance of gifts and what penalties should be imposed for specific infractions.

Similarities

Codes of ethics and codes of conduct are designed to promote ethical behavior among members of a group or in an individual. Both help to identify what is acceptable behavior and what is not and to promote higher standards of behavior within the group. Both help establish a framework for evaluating the behavior of the individual or group member and both help identify those who subscribe to these codes as members of a specific group.

Differences

Ethical codes are focus on broader issues and are often framed as a belief statement regarding the organization's mission, its values and expectations for its members. A conduct code is designed to translate the ethics code into specific do and don't guidelines and to promote adherence to the code of ethics by providing specific examples of real world applications of the code of ethics. The code of ethics is very broad and theoretically can be used to guide decision-making in all areas of member behavior. A code of conduct only covers what specific incidents and situations the composers think to put into the code. Should behavior occur which is not covered under the conduct code, members would have to refer to the code of ethics in order to revise the code of conduct to

cover the omitted behavior or situation.

The Obafemi Awolowo University has a “Code of Conduct” for staff and “Matriculation Oath” for students. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (in Nigeria) has a “Code of Practice” as an appendix to its constitution. What is being proposed is a Code of Academic Integrity and Ethics to be read and signed by all staff and students of the University.

6. Ethical Violations or Misconduct

Globally, misconduct relating to ethics in research, scholarship and teaching include:

- amorous relationships between students and teachers
- conflict of interest
- breach of the Honour Code; an instrument of student academic behaviour
- Incidents of racial and sexual harassment.

Misconduct in research means

- a. fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the scientific community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research; or
- b. material failure to comply with federal requirements for protection of researchers, human subjects, or the public or for insuring the welfare of laboratory animals; or
- c. failure to meet other material legal requirements governing research.

Misconduct in Research does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data.

7. Some Causes of Academic Misconduct

Graduate students are under a lot of pressure while completing their academic programmes. These pressures may tempt scholars and researchers to “cut corners,” borrow an idea without proper attribution, or stray from standard practices in a particular academic field. All academics and especially Graduate

Assistants, Assistant Lecturers (who are student teachers and researchers) should strive to be attentive to how the following pressures impact their conduct in the classroom, the library, and the laboratory. These pressures include:

- **Deadlines:** Deadlines determined by university calendars and other schedules can complicate the research process and offer a temptation to “cut corners.”
- **Productivity and competition:** Scholars may feel pressure to increase their output to secure promotions, monetary or professional rewards.
- **Collaborative and individual work:** Research projects offer great opportunities for collaboration—and the need to accept responsibility for one’s own role in the project, as well as the results obtained by the group.
- **Criticism and trust:** Scholars scrutinize and analyze the work of other academics in order to ensure that research methods are appropriately applied and results rigorously reviewed. Criticism is intended to build trust and increase knowledge; however, dishonest criticism will produce an erosion of that trust.
- **Multiple roles:** Graduate students often are teachers as well as researchers, and thus must consider the ethical implications of the instructor-student relationship as well as those of relationships between professional equals. Lecturers teach, research and do a lot of administrative work in committees.
- **Processes and products:** Elaborate processes may not always produce intended results. Disappointment may tempt one toward misrepresentation.
- **Lack of information:** Learning new skills can include becoming aware of new ethical dilemmas.

These pressures or some combination thereof will be present throughout your academic career and beyond. As you make your way in an

academic discipline, continue to be aware of the ethical implications of the work that you do. Allow these ethics to inform your own personal values in conducting scholarship, teaching, and research.

Continue to include ethical considerations in discussions with your student colleagues, teachers, researchers and others with whom you will be working. A healthy dialogue about academic integrity and ethics will go a long way to ensure that the public trust and the professional trust are in good hands. As times change and knowledge increases, new ethical demands will be placed on you and your work. With a clearly articulated set of standards, you will be able to meet the ethical challenges that this new knowledge presents.

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