Module 3: Ethics, Consequences, and Reflection

Now that you know how to uphold academic integrity and how to avoid violations, let’s talk about why academic integrity matters and what can happen if you violate the policy.

To start, let’s consider a few hypothetical situations.

You would care if you found out your doctor had plagiarized work in medical school, right?

You’d be concerned if your lawyer only passed the bar because he or she cheated on the exam?

Might you be bothered if it turned out your professors didn’t actually earn the credentials behind their names?

We place a lot of trust and respect in those who have earned academic degrees. We would consider a violation of that trust by means of cheating or plagiarizing to be unethical. You are in the process of earning a degree now. At Duquesne, you are here to learn and gain important skill sets for the future. The knowledge and skills you acquire here will be what you rely on to get a job. If you cheat and plagiarize in pursuit of your degree, you aren’t really earning it.

Cheating and plagiarism are significant ethical issues you face as students. You should hold yourself to the same standard you would hold for others offering you an important service, like your doctor, or a lawyer, or your professors. If you wouldn’t want them to cheat and plagiarize, you shouldn’t consider doing it either.

At Duquesne, there are consequences for violations of academic integrity, even if you didn’t intend to violate the policy.

At the less severe end, you can be penalized on the grade for an assignment -- you might get a lowered grade or fail. You can have your grade lowered or be failed in a whole course, too. If you’re failed in a course for academic integrity violations, you can’t drop or withdraw from the course to avoid the penalty, either.

More severe sanctions include suspension or expulsion from your school or college and the university as whole. An awarded degree can be revoked.

There aren’t only consequences for this behavior in a university setting, though. What happens when you face employers and can’t answer their questions because you never really learned what you claimed to? What happens in the real world if you plagiarize in an important brief at work?

Ninety-two Air Force officers lost their security clearances after they were found to have regularly cheated on proficiency exams for those who are in charge of nuclear missiles.

New York Times reporter Jayson Blair resigned from his post after he was found to have repeatedly plagiarized the work of other reporters in his stories.

High-profile cases like these appear in headlines each year, and low profile cases have certainly lead to the firing, resignation, or demotion of employees across the world.

In closing, consider the ethical side of academic integrity, beyond the consequences. As a student, you have to make an ethical choice about how you will conduct your work. What do you think?

Take some time now to briefly write about why you think it is important to uphold academic integrity. You can also tweet your thoughts about academic integrity by using the hashtag on screen.
Congratulations! You’ve completed the module. Now you can conquer any assignment with what you’ve learned about avoiding violations of academic integrity.

Please follow the link to the survey. Your responses will help us gauge the effectiveness of the module and improve it for future use.