

Academic Integrity and Professional Conduct

Freedom to learn depends upon appropriate opportunities and conditions in the classroom, laboratory, on campus and in clinical settings. Faculty, staff, students and visitors respect the conditions conducive to such freedom by conducting themselves in a responsible manner, abiding by federal and state laws and adhering to the rules and regulations set forth by the Regents of the University of Nebraska and University of Nebraska Medical Center. The University may take independent disciplinary action on those who violate criminal and civil law as noted in the University of Nebraska Regents Bylaws paragraph 5.5. Accordingly, the University of Nebraska Medical Center has developed the following general guidelines pertaining to academic integrity and personal conduct which provide and safeguard the right of individuals to exercise fully their freedom to pursue academic goals without undue interference from others.

Minimum Standards of Academic Integrity

In order to assure an understanding between students, faculty and staff concerning what types of activity constitute violations of academic integrity, several definitions and examples follow in the section on Academic Misconduct. These examples are not intended to be all inclusive and other actions not listed here may be considered violations.

Instructors, academic departments and colleges will also impose specific standards of conduct which may be more rigorous than the minimum standards cited here. Students are obligated to follow these guidelines and to ask instructors for guidance if they do not understand them or have questions.

Cheating

A general definition of cheating is the use or attempted use of unauthorized materials or information for an academic exercise.

Examples of cheating include but are not limited to:

1. using unauthorized materials such as books, notes, calculators or other aids during an examination or other academic exercises;
2. receiving unauthorized assistance from another person during an exam or exercise such as copying answers, receiving answer signals, conversation or having another person take an examination for you;
3. providing assistance to another person during an exam or exercise, such as allowing your answers to be copied, signaling answers or taking an exam for someone else;
4. obtaining answers and/or other information without authorization from someone who has previously taken an examination;
5. including all or a portion of previous work for another assignment without authorization;

6. appropriating another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit, i.e. an appropriate attribution or citation (plagiarism). For example, a student who quotes verbatim the results of a previous student's work in a required term paper, but fails to credit the individual through citation. The work is recent and thus cannot be considered common knowledge.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is defined as the falsification of official documents and/or obtaining records, examinations or documents without authorization. Several examples of academic misconduct are:

1. the unauthorized acquisition of all or part of an unadministered test;
2. selling or otherwise distributing all or part of an unadministered test;
3. changing an answer or grade on an examination without authorization;
4. falsification of information on an official university document such as a grade report, transcript, an instructor's grade book or evaluation file or being an accessory to an act of such falsification;
5. forging the signature of an authorizing official on documents such as letters of permission, petitions, drop/add, transcripts, and/or other official documents;
6. unauthorized entry into a building, office, file or computer data base to view, alter or acquire documents.

Research misconduct has been defined by the Federal DHHS Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and UNMC subscribes to this definition: "Research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results." Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion. It is important that every student understand the meaning of fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism.

Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them. Some examples are:

1. indicating a laboratory experiment had been repeated numerous times or
2. done in a controlled environment when it had not, thus leading to an invented or uncorroborated conclusion.

Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research or academic performance is not accurately represented in the research or academic records.

Some examples are:

1. altering an original source document, misquoting or misrepresenting a source to support a point of view or hypothesis;
2. using computer software to change research images so they show something different than the original data.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit, i.e. an appropriate attribution or citation. An example is:

In the methods section of a thesis, a graduate student describes a procedure used in research for the thesis. The procedure was developed by a fellow graduate student in the laboratory of their major professor; however, neither the student who developed this procedure nor the major professor was given credit in the thesis. This implies that the author of the thesis had himself developed the procedure.

Allegations of research misconduct should be reported to the Research Integrity Officer as outlined in UNMC Policy 8005, Research Integrity.

A violation of the standards of academic integrity is viewed as a very serious matter at UNMC. Such a violation will, in most cases, lead to disciplinary action. Students who wish to appeal charges of violations of academic integrity and/or proposed disciplinary action may do so under the provisions of Section 5.4 of the Bylaws of the Board of Regents.