



Office of the Chair and Graduate Chair

DPES 2011-7 Academic Integrity

From: William Gough, Chair, DPES

Date: February 15, 2011

Last term only a few cases of academic misconduct crossed my desk. Although I would like to believe that this is reflective of a lack of cheating in the courses in our department, I suspect that this is not the case. I strongly urge instructors to be more vigilant in defending academic integrity and also not to take matters into their own hands. I need to be part of the process. The UTSC policy is provided in detail in the Academic Handbook and can be found at http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~vpdean/utsc_policies.html (in particular, Section VIII).

Before detailing this process, I want to emphasize that academic integrity is much more than catching rule breakers. In the first instance, we need to carefully consider the design of our evaluation tools in order to limit opportunities to cheat. This includes exam strategies such as seating arrangements and multiple versions of exams, the use of turnitin.com, clearly articulated use of aids, varying assignments from year to year, restricted re-use of multiple choice questions, etc. We also need to clearly indicate to our students the consequences of academic offences which can escalate to zero in the course, transcript notation and ultimately, expulsion.

If you do suspect an academic infraction, you need to first discuss the incident with the student as soon as possible to allow the student to provide additional information. If you are a teaching assistant and/or invigilator you need to contact the instructor immediately. If the piece of work in question is worth less than 10%, and it is a first time offence, we can handle the case within the department. You, the instructor, need to provide me with a report that includes a description of the infraction, the meeting with the

student, the weighting of the material, and any additional evidence that is appropriate for the case such as turnitin.com reports or copies of plagiarized material. I then meet with the student to determine if there are any mitigating circumstances. The maximum penalty that can be assessed at the departmental level is to assign a zero to the piece in question. This penalty is assigned by me (or a designate as I may from time to time appoint). If a greater penalty is deemed appropriate, I have the prerogative to send the file with a recommendation to the Dean's Designate for consideration. If the piece of work exceeds 10% or if the accused is a repeat offender, I send the case with my report to the Dean's Designate. The Dean's Designate will review the case and meet with the student and sometimes the instructor. She has the authority to assign a penalty greater than the value of the piece in question, as well as other sanctions such as transcript notation. In all cases I send a report to the Dean's Designate so that offences are recorded and that this knowledge be available in the hopefully unlikely event that the student commits an offence in a course offered by another department.