ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

STATEMENT OF GOOD PRACTICE AND ETHICS IN INFORMAL ASSESSMENT

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AIMS OF ASSIGNMENTS

In many subjects offered by the Faculty, students undertake assessment tasks in the form of assignments. The setting of assignments is intended to promote a number of educational aims, including: furthering each student's learning of the subject, particularly the acquisition of practical skills; providing a means for staff to assess each student's learning; providing feedback to the student on his or her progress in learning; and providing feedback to staff on the effectiveness of their teaching. These aims can be subverted if students deceive staff about the authorship of their work.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Using sources

Whenever anything from someone else's work is used, it is standard practice to indicate exactly where the information comes from. Acknowledgment is achieved by using a standard system of referencing, such as footnotes, end notes, the Harvard system, etc. The Guide to Writing Assignments (available from the Co-op Bookshop) explains how to use all these standard systems of reference.

Students may also access the BELL Program Assignment Writing Guide online to assist with the preparation of essays, reports, case studies and other forms of written assessment: http://www.bell.uts.edu.au/awg
Collaboration

In some cases assignment guidelines may permit or require students to cooperate in developing a solution to part or all of an assignment. This may occur formally when a staff member assigns students to groups and indicates which components of the assignment they are to work on as a group and which components they are to work on individually.

It may also occur informally. For example, some assignments may involve an 'ideas gathering' phase followed by an 'execution' phase. Students may be permitted to collaborate informally on the preliminary phase(s), but be expected to work completely individually on the subsequent phase(s). In a programming assignment, for example, it is normally acceptable for one student to discuss with another student (or other person) the specifications of the task so as to determine the requirements (see below). Whether this collaboration could extend to subsequent phases (such as the design phase) would depend on the assignment guidelines; normally, collaboration in the design and subsequent phases is not permitted.

Depending on the type of assignment and degree of collaboration permitted it is possible to define several categories of collaboration:

- individual effort (the student is required to work on all phases entirely by himself or herself)
- group effort (the student is required to work on all phases as part of a formal group), and
- mixed effort (the student is required or permitted to work on some or all phases as part of a formal or informal group).

Unless assignment guidelines specifically state otherwise, a student should assume that an assignment requires a completely individual effort. The forms of cooperative collaborative behaviour that are acceptable under most circumstances are:

- discussing assignment specifications with another student (or other person) with a view to clarifying what is required
- getting help from another student (or other person) on technical matters that are not directly part of the assessment task (e.g. how to use some facility provided by the computer system, such as the editor)
- getting advice from another student (or other person) to debug a program; this is a common occurrence in computing, and
- obtaining help from a tutor.

Generally, what distinguishes the acceptable cases of collaborative behaviour from the unacceptable ones is the physical exchange of material between two students. It is acceptable to discuss topics and seek advice from fellow students; it is not acceptable to exchange copies of each other's work, even if it is only for reference. By exchanging actual copies of your work, you are either creating the opportunity for other students to use and submit that work as their own, or you are using another person's individual effort as the basis of your own work. Such behaviour will be treated as student misconduct (see below).
STUDENT MISCONDUCT

The three areas of unacceptable behaviour listed below are considered by the Faculty to be forms of academic misconduct. Such behaviour will result in a charge of misconduct, as defined in Rule 16.2 of the UTS: Calendar. Penalties for proven cases of student misconduct range from a written reprimand to exclusion from the University. The normal penalty is a zero mark for the subject concerned.

Students are advised to familiarise themselves with the rules relating to Discipline and Appeals for Students online at: http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/rules/16-index.html

Outright lying

This is seen most often in programming assignments, where the program does not run, or runs incorrectly, yet the output handed in is correct. The output has been 'tailored' using a word processor in an attempt to fool the marker. Lying is never acceptable behaviour.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the action of taking and using as one’s own the thoughts, writings or inventions of another with the intention to deceive.

For example, if one student in a computing subject were to obtain a copy of another student's (or other person's) program, modify parts of the program (e.g. change variable names) so as to disguise its origin, and then submit the modified program as his or her solution, this would be considered plagiarism.

As another example, a student may obtain all or a major part of the solution to an assignment problem from a textbook and, without acknowledging this, submit the solution as his or her own work.

As a further example, a student may use a source of information in an essay without acknowledging the source. Such plagiarism may range from a sentence or two, or a table or diagram, to occasional cases where the entire paper consists of material copied from a book with only a few sentences added by the student. The student thus submits another person’s ideas as his or her own work.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating and is never acceptable. Students caught submitting plagiarised work will be charged with academic misconduct, as defined in Rule 5.3 of the UTS: Calendar.

Collusion

Collusion occurs when a student combines with one or more other students (or other persons) to produce a common essay or solution to part or all of an assignment, disguises the shared origin of the solution, and submits the solution as his or her own individual work. Allowing another student access to your work is also regarded as collusion.
Students caught submitting work that is identical or contains sections that are identical to that of another student will be charged with academic misconduct, as defined in Rule 5.3 of the *UTS: Calendar*. Students who have allowed another student to access their work will also be charged under the same rule, as by giving your work to another student, you are assisting them to cheat (Rule 5.3 (1) (b)).

Collusion is regarded as a form of cheating and is never acceptable.