Academic Honesty

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is appropriating the work of others and representing it as your own. This is considered a serious violation of ethical standards in academic settings. In short, plagiarism is cheating.

Examples of plagiarism:

(1) Buying a paper off the internet or any other source, putting your name on it, and submitting it to fulfill a course requirement.

(2) Borrowing a paper that a fellow student has submitted for a different course and submitting it as your own work.

(3) Copying material off the internet, out of books or journals, or from any other source, without citing the source. Even when the source is cited, copying text verbatim (word-for-word) is plagiarism, unless it is included in quotation marks and is explicitly cited with a page number.

(4) Borrowing ideas (including copying but rewording text) from any source without citing the source.

Why is plagiarism wrong?

Plagiarism is unfair.

(1) It is unfair to other students in the class who do their own work without cheating.

(2) It is unfair to the author of the original work, who put substantial time and effort into producing that work, and deserves credit.

(3) It is unfair to the professor, who must dedicate time and effort to catching cheaters, which takes time and energy away from more productive activities.

(4) It is unfair to the plagiarist, who is not getting the full benefit from their education. A college education should challenge you, should help you learn and should help you grow as a person. You accomplish none of these goals by cheating.
What are the sanctions for students caught plagiarizing?

The sanctions depend on the severity of the case, whether the student has been caught before, the student’s attitude, and other extenuating circumstances. In the most severe cases, plagiarism can result in the student being expelled from school. In my classes, the typical sanctions are as follows:

In most cases, plagiarism in SOC 485/585 COD 585 will be referred to the Academic Honesty and Ethics Committee in the Division of Social Sciences. The committee will investigate the case and determine the appropriate sanction. In most cases, the professor will recommend the following sanctions:

(1) For undergraduate students: For the first violation, the recommendation will be a zero on the assignment, or a reduction in the student's course grade of 10 percent, whichever is greater. In addition, the student must write a letter admitting to cheating, and committing to never repeating this action for the remainder of their college career. A report of the incident will be sent to the student’s advisor, the college dean and the vice president of academic affairs, and will be archived. For repeat violations, the recommendation will be an F in the course. In egregious cases, the professor will recommend that the student be dismissed from the university.

Note that if two violations are discovered simultaneously, they will be treated as a first and second offense, warranting more extreme sanctions. For example, if a student is found to have plagiarized a paper, then on further review it is discovered that a previous assignment that has already been graded and handed back was also plagiarized, these will be treated as two offenses.

(2) For graduate students: In most cases, plagiarism by graduate students will not be referred to the Academic Honesty and Ethics Committee; instead, any violation will result in an F in the course. In addition, the student must write a letter admitting to cheating, and committing to never repeating this action for the remainder of their graduate and professional career. A copy of the letter and of the work will be forwarded to the student’s advisor, to the division chair, to the dean of the college and to the vice president of academic affairs, and will be archived in the student’s file. In egregious cases, the professor will recommend to the dean that the student be dismissed from the university.

Note: These are typical sanctions. Each violation will be handled individually, however, and the circumstances of the case will be taken into account. Harsher sanctions may be imposed by the Academic Honesty and Ethics Committee, including expulsion for the first violation if appropriate. The student’s demeanor and willingness to take responsibility for his/her actions are one factor that affects the harshness of the sanction.
Why is plagiarism punished so harshly?

Plagiarism is frequently difficult to detect. Generally other students may know what is going on, but they are reluctant to turn in their fellow students, even though the cheater’s actions may directly affect them and their own grade in the course. Therefore, when a professor suspects a student has plagiarized, the professor must search for the original source and find other evidence that demonstrates the student is cheating. This is time consuming and difficult. In addition, students frequently challenge the professor and deny any wrongdoing, which makes it more difficult and time-consuming. Because plagiarism is difficult to detect and prove, in instances where it is proven, it must be punished harshly. This is the most effective way to deter students from trying it.

What is the DSU policy on plagiarism?

The Regulations in the Delta State University Student Handbook [http://www.deltastate.edu/pages/393.asp] state:

“The statements listed below, although not inclusive, enumerate certain violations of the student regulations and may subject violators to appropriate disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion:

[...]

9. Plagiarism, cheating, or knowingly furnishing false and/or misleading information to the University or other similar forms of dishonesty in University-related affairs.”


“Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. If it is established that a violation has occurred, instructors may determine the penalty as outlined in their course syllabi. The usual penalty for a first offense involves a grade of zero on the test, examination, or paper in question. A second offense in a subsequent semester will be reviewed for more stringent action and will usually result in expulsion from the university. All plagiarism offenses should be reported to the student’s advisor, the division/department chair, the dean, and the Office of Academic Affairs. The latter shall maintain records to track multiple offenses.” (p. 54).