

# Helpful Hints on Academic Integrity for Graduate and Teaching Assistants (GAs and TAs)

- GAs and TAs - in a position of trust and responsibility, privy to confidential information
- dual role - student AND employee
- challenges you may face
  - if you are proctoring an exam and you suspect cheating
  - if you are marking papers and someone pressures you for a grade or threatens you; etc. – see FAQs at the end.

## Your right and obligations:

*“The obligation of each employee to report safety hazards to supervisory personnel of the Employer and, where reasonable, to take positive measures to correct the same is acknowledged.”*

*(from Article 18.01 “Health and Safety” of the CUPE 4580 Collective Agreement)*

## When you suspect an offense has occurred:

- **You must report the misconduct to the course instructor (or the supervisor of your GA/TA appointment)**
- The instructor will review the issue (e.g. obtain supporting information, meet with the student informally, etc.), and will either deal with the complaint informally or refer it for further review and investigation in accordance with the procedure outlined in [Senate Bylaw 31: Academic Integrity](#).

## If you’re uncertain about procedure:

- Consult the appropriate Senate policy/bylaw
- Speak to the professor who is supervising your GA/TA appointment
- Contact the Dept. Head or Associate Dean
- Seek advice from the Academic Integrity Office

## Some Relevant Senate Bylaws and Policies

[www.uwindsor.ca/policies](http://www.uwindsor.ca/policies)

### **Bylaw 31: Academic Integrity;**

#### **Procedures for Addressing Student Non-Academic Misconduct**

- Definitions of misconduct Procedures in case of alleged misconduct (academic and non-academic):
  1. When a GA/TA suspects that there may be a possible breach of academic/non-academic integrity, they must immediately bring it to the attention of the instructor, with the evidence upon which they have based their conclusions.
  2. The instructor will review the issue and reach a decision as to whether to proceed formally or informally.

The GA/TA must avoid making any comments or statements to the student(s) with regards to the matter.

### **Bylaw 33: Student Rights and Freedoms**

from section 3. **Confidentiality:**

*“Respect must be accorded the essentially confidential relationship between the University and its students by preserving to the maximum extent possible the privacy of all records relating to each student. Controlling principles are listed below:*

*3.1 The official student academic records, supporting documents, and other student files are confidential. They are to be maintained only by authorized members of the University staff employed for that purpose. The above principle of confidentiality is applicable to the records of all Faculty, Departmental and Administrative offices.”*

### **Bylaw 54 – Undergraduate Academic Evaluation Procedures;**

#### **Bylaw 55: Graduate Academic Evaluation procedures & Senate Policy on Conduct of Exams and Tests**

- Procedures before and after exam
- Emergency procedures: Medical issues; Fire alarms / Evacuation

After the exam:

- Preserve the integrity of the exam.
- NEVER leave exams unattended.
- Remain on campus in a secure place.
- Maintain continuity of possession.
- Do not provide exam access to anyone.

- Report any requests for unauthorized assistance.

## Frequently Asked Questions for GAs and TAs

### **Q. What should I do if I discover a student cheating?**

A. You should report the cheating to the professor at the first available opportunity. Where possible, you should engage another GA/TA or proctor to corroborate what you have observed (say, for example, if it occurs in an examination setting).

### **Q. Is this necessary?**

A. Yes, this is really important. You have an important role to play in the maintenance of academic integrity at the University because, depending on what your supervisor expects you to do, you will have regular contact with students, with proctoring exams, and with reviewing work that may be plagiarized.

### **Q. What will happen next?**

A. This depends on the nature of the misconduct and the action the professor and/or Associate Dean decides to take with respect to the misconduct. If the matter proceeds as an Academic Integrity matter, you may be contacted by the Dean or the designate of the Dean to discuss what you know in more detail.

### **Q. What challenges might I face in working with students as it relates to academic integrity?**

A. Students might ask you to help them cheat on a test or pressure you to engage in dishonest behaviour (e.g., giving them the answers to a homework assignment). You might also come across opportunities to turn a "blind eye" to an academic offence.

### **Q. What should I do if this happens?**

A. You should contact the professor for whom you are working and report this. You could also contact the Associate Dean or the Dean of your Faculty, consult with the Vice-Provost, or seek advice from the Academic Integrity Officer.

### **Q. What about if I report cheating to the professor but the professor does nothing about it?**

A. This is an unfortunate situation. Mention it to the professor again. Perhaps he/she intends to deal with it and will welcome your friendly reminder. If that doesn't work, there are others to whom you can report the misconduct, including the Department Head, the Associate Dean of the Faculty, or the Academic Integrity Officer.

### **Q. Have students ever complained about the integrity of GAs or TAs?**

A. Yes, regrettably they have. Some complaints have included: the TA treats some students better than others; the TA gives some students more time than others; the TA gives some students answers or lets them look at the teacher's manual; I know the TA saw someone cheat but the TA didn't do anything about it; the TA gives preferences to students with the same cultural background as him/her; the TA is never there at office hours; the TA doesn't return my emails; the TA was rude to me.

### **Q. What can I do to avoid having such an allegation made against me?**

A. Do your very best to treat all students equally. Do not offer any extra time or privileges to

some students that are not available to all students in the course as directed by the professor. Report anything improper to the professor. Be at office hours when they are scheduled. Return emails within a reasonable period of time. Do not act in a manner that could be perceived by others to constitute offering an academic advantage to one student over another. Act professionally at all times since, when you are dealing with students, you are standing in the shoes of a professor.

**Q. What are examples of improper conduct for a GA/TA as it relates to academic integrity?**

A. Some examples are inflating grades when marking exams, tests, or assignments, giving preferential treatment to one or more students over others, altering a student's exam, test, or assignment in any way, agreeing with students to help them cheat, failing to report suspected cheating, providing false information, obstructing academic or other activities, and/or accepting money to do any of these things.

**Q. What risks do I face if I do any of these things?**

A. You face the risk of being terminated from your employment with the University, you risk suspension or expulsion as a student, and you risk being able to enter your chosen profession, depending on the ethical requirements of that profession. An example of this occurred in 2009. A graduate teaching assistant was found guilty of helping a student cheat during an exam and was suspended for two years.

**Q. If I am charged with academic misconduct while I am a GA/TA, what happens?**

A. The procedure you face is similar to that of any other student, because you would be disciplined for misconduct under Bylaw 31 in your capacity as a student. A Bylaw 31 investigation, however, is separate and apart from any disciplinary measures that may be taken against you as an employee of the University, which are governed by your collective agreement with the University. You should know that committing an academic offence in one's capacity as a GA or TA is considered one of the most egregious offences and GAs or TAs who have been convicted of cheating have been suspended.

***You are some of our best ambassadors and role models.***

***Thank you for the work that you do!***