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UNIVERSITY  
OF SOUTHERN  
CALIFORNIA

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## *Academic Integrity*

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### **A Guide for Graduate Students**

*Integrity and honesty are fundamental to the pursuit of truth and knowledge at any academic institution. These core values are essential to the function of the academic community at a research university such as the University of Southern California.*

*Only by maintaining the highest standards of integrity are the conducting of research, the evaluation of students' academic performance, and the ultimate awarding of degrees meaningful and representative of reality.*

*The following information is intended to assist graduate students at USC in understanding and abiding by the university's standards for academic honesty.*

#### **Principles of Academic Honesty**

Hallmarks of the academic community include respect for intellectual property and emphasis on individual work. The value placed on these elements of intellectual accomplishment may be significantly greater than in other communities (professional, cultural, etc.) that students have experienced.

Because the definition and dissemination of new knowledge are at the heart of the university's primary endeavor, respect for intellectual property is critical. When the words, ideas or discoveries of another are used in any academic exercise, the source must be cited

clearly in association with the source material used. This respect must be maintained whether the source is published or unpublished documentary information, information provided through a scholarly or professional presentation, or information resulting from the work of another student.

Likewise, while joint work may be permitted or required for particular assignments, faculty evaluation and degree conferral ultimately focus on individual students. It therefore is of the utmost importance that collaborative work and individual accomplishment be clearly differentiated in any academic assignment presented.

## Standards of Academic Honesty at USC

Academic honesty standards for students are articulated in several places. General university-wide standards may be found in the Student Conduct Code printed in the current student handbook, *SCampus* (§11.00). Faculty frequently include statements in syllabi pertinent to the particular assignments for a course. Students should be aware that, in some cases, academic behavior generally acceptable in many courses may be prohibited in a particular course. Students therefore are encouraged to be cognizant of the requirements for completing specific assignments.

In addition to standards articulated in the above manner, graduate students should be aware of standards of academic and professional conduct relevant to their discipline as may be articulated by their department or school. These may include, for example, standards of conduct in research, in treatment of subjects or clients, or in personal ethics.

## Graduate Students at USC

The university expects that, by virtue of advanced academic standing and of substantial previous experience in an academic environment, graduate students enter USC with an awareness of the general standards for appropriate academic behavior and of what constitutes academic honesty.

The university also views academic dishonesty within the graduate student community with the utmost seriousness, and when discovered, meets such dishonesty with serious consequences. Graduate students are urged to familiarize themselves with the specific standards articulated by the university in the current *SCampus* (Student Conduct Code §11.00 and Appendix A).

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*The following are issues of academic integrity particularly relevant to academic work in which graduate students engage.*

### **Plagiarism**

As defined in the University Student Conduct Code, plagiarism includes “the submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student’s own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form,” “the submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style,” and “improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers.” (§11.11)

Books, published papers, written documents, and electronic information (including words, data, drawings, and photographs) are the intellectual property of the persons who created them and are the legal property of the parties named in the copyright notice.

Students who, in their written academic work, incorporate the ideas of others, whether as direct quotation or as paraphrase, are obligated to credit the source through appropriate citation. Likewise, information used in

academic projects or in oral presentations must be credited to the source.

Normally, direct quotation must be cited by use of quotation marks (or block indentation of a larger portion of text) immediately followed by a footnote. Paraphrase or use of a concept originating from another is cited using a footnote directly following the source material. In neither case is inclusion of the source in a bibliography or works-cited list alone adequate.

Graduate students will discover that a specific style of citation is standard for their particular academic or professional discipline. Students therefore are encouraged to become familiar with and use that particular style from the outset of their graduate program at the university. A student’s academic advisor or the graduate advisor for their academic department should be able to identify the appropriate style and corresponding manual.

It is expected that written assignments represent a student’s own

work as submitted. Toward that end, any editorial or research assistance a student may receive should be approved by the assigning faculty member prior to gaining such assistance.

### **Unauthorized Collaboration**

In particular courses and disciplines, collaborative projects and assignments may be required in preparation for professional practice. Graduate students should be aware that, unless explicitly directed or granted permission to work collaboratively on assignments, the expectation will be that a student has accomplished academic work entirely independent of assistance from fellow students or other persons.

Prohibition against unauthorized collaboration extends to all academic assignments, including course projects, take-home examinations and other out-of-class work, as well as any take-home portion of a preliminary review, comprehensive or qualifying examination or other evaluation tool related to a student’s program in general.

### ***Violation of Examinations***

Any use of unauthorized assistance during an examination is considered academically dishonest. This includes (but is not limited to) any use of written or electronic information such as books, notes, or calculators unless expressly authorized by the faculty member responsible for administering the examination. Likewise, communication with another student or any other person during an examination will be considered a violation of the integrity of that examination.

### ***Fabrication***

The invention or alteration of data, information or citation in any academic exercise constitutes a violation of academic integrity. This includes fabrication of material submitted for lab assignments, class projects or other assignments, whether wholly or partially falsified. Fabricated information constitutes work representing neither the student's own effort nor the truth concerning a particular line of investigation or study.

### ***Protection of Personal Work***

In the conduct of academic work at the university, in addition to an obligation for accomplishing their work with integrity, students bear a responsibility to protect their own work from others. In the completion of written assignments and projects this means taking reasonable precautions against having their work used by others, as well as not providing written assignments or solutions to projects, homework or examinations to others who may use them in an unauthorized manner.

Students should be aware of the vulnerability of data and written documents when using computing systems and should safeguard their work accordingly. Leaving files on unprotected computers or fixed drives in public user areas and sharing computer passwords with

others are examples of behavior to be avoided.

Similarly, the potential for inappropriate use by others should be considered before posting research or scholarly work to a personal web page. Students are urged to familiarize themselves with standards of ethical conduct published by USC's Information Services Division.

In the completion of course, qualifying, comprehensive and placement examinations or other evaluations, students bear the responsibility to ensure that other examinees do not gain use of their answers or information, whether by copying, communication or other means.

### ***Comprehensive and Qualifying Examinations, Theses and Dissertations***

Master's degree comprehensive examinations and theses, when required, represent the synthesis and culmination of the student's formal program of study. The same is true of doctoral qualifying examinations, pre-dissertation research projects and dissertations. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are of the most serious nature at this level of work, and as such will normally result in failure without opportunity to retake in the case of comprehensive or qualifying examinations.

In instances of fabrication, plagiarism or other forms of dishonesty in dissertations or theses, dismissal from the program or university-wide expulsion are the normal consequences. Should such dishonesty be discovered subsequent to the conferral of the degree, revocation of the degree will be the normal response.

### ***Disciplinary Actions***

Students and faculty share in the responsibility of upholding and protecting academic honesty standards within the university. When a violation of those

standards becomes apparent, it is their consequent responsibility to confront the violation.

In the event that a graduate student becomes aware of academic dishonesty, the student should immediately report the violation to the appropriate faculty member. The faculty member is then responsible for substantiating the violation, confronting the offender, and reporting the violation to the relevant academic dean and the Office for Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards.

The normal consequence for most acts of academic dishonesty includes a failing grade for the course. Because graduate students are held to the highest standards of integrity, the university believes generally that sanctions for graduate student dishonesty should be greater than for violations committed by undergraduate students. Consequently, in addition to the grade penalty in a course, a graduate student responsible for academic dishonesty may generally expect to be considered for suspension or dismissal from their respective program, school or from the university.

In cases of dishonesty occurring in theses or dissertations, the violation may be reviewed after the student has left the university and the degree conferred. In such cases, revocation of degree is the normal consequence when dishonesty is confirmed.

In all cases of academic dishonesty, faculty are required to report the incident and the action they took to the Office for Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards. Students accused of violating the university's academic integrity standards are accorded specific rights including an appropriate impartial review process. A complete statement of rights and procedures may be found in the University Student Conduct Code printed in the current *SCampus*.

## Resources

Following is a partial list of resources to assist graduate students with written assignments. Students should consult with their academic advisor and other departmental faculty concerning research and writing resources specific to their discipline.

- American Heritage Dictionaries. (1995). *Roger's II: the new thesaurus* (3rd ed.) Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
- American Institute of Physics. Publication Board. (1978) *Style manual for guidance in the preparation of papers for journals published by the American Institute of Physics* (3rd ed.) New York: American Institute of Physics.
- American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Atchity, K.J. (1995). *A writer's time: making the time to write* (Rev. Ed.) New York: Norton.
- Barzun, J. (1986). *On writing, editing and publishing: essays explicative and hortatory* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Becker, H.S. (1986). *Writing for social scientists: how to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Becker, H.S. (1998) *Tricks of the trade: how to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Crews, F. (1992). *Random House Handbook* (6th ed.). New York: Random House.
- Dodd, J. S., (Ed.). (1997). *The American Chemical Society style guide: a manual for authors and editors* (2nd ed.) Washington, DC : American Chemical Society.
- Gibaldi, J., & Ahtert, W.S. (1999). *Modern Language Association handbook for writers of research papers* (5th ed.). New York: Modern Language Association of America.
- Li, X. and Crane, N.B. (1996). *Electronic styles: a handbook for citing electronic information*. Medford, N.J.: Information Today.
- Strunk, W., Jr., White, E.B., & Angell, R. (2000). *The elements of style* (4th ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Turabian, K.L. (1996). *A manual for writers of term papers, theses and dissertations* (6th ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago.
- University of Chicago Press. (1993). *The Chicago manual of style* (14th ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, K. G. (1999). *Columbia guide to standard American English*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Winkler, A.C., et al. (1998). *Writing the research paper: a handbook with both the MLA and APA documentation styles* (5th ed.). Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

## Further Information

This document has been developed by the Office for Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards in consultation and cooperation with the Graduate School. Any questions about disciplinary information should be directed to the Office for Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards, while inquiries concerning graduate programs and procedures should be directed to the appropriate office of the Graduate School.

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**<http://www.usc.edu/dept/student-affairs/student-conduct>**