

BISLA Plagiarism and Cheating Policy

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OFFICIAL POLICY

All assignments at BISLA should be: [a] based on your reading of the sources, [b] based on your analysis of the sources, and [c] written by you.



If a teacher suspects an assignment is not your work, that teacher may require you to answer questions about the topic of the assignment or about the assignment itself. These questions may be verbal or written. If you are unable to answer these questions, the teacher may dock you points or give you a 0 for the assignment.

If a teacher has evidence that an assignment is not your work, that teacher is required to refer you to an academic disciplinary committee. If you are found guilty of plagiarism or cheating, you will at minimum receive a 0 on the assignment. The committee may also fail you in the course, if you have not failed it already.

In addition to these penalties, a student who is found guilty of plagiarism or cheating may be expelled from BISLA. The disciplinary committee may, at its own discretion, choose to put a student on academic probation if it is the student's first offense. If it is the student's second offense or if there is evidence that the student has plagiarized or cheated multiple times, that student should be expelled.

BEST PRACTICES

Plagiarism

If you use a statement, argument or idea from someone without giving him or her credit, you are guilty of plagiarism. You can avoid plagiarism by citing your source(s).

You must cite a source in two cases: [a] whenever you are using the exact wording of the source (in this case, enclose the words in quotation marks; if you add words to the quotation, use square brackets) and [b] whenever you are summarizing or paraphrasing a statement, argument, idea or narrative from the source. If you do not do this, you are guilty of plagiarism. If an entire paragraph in your paper is a summary or paraphrase, feel free to leave your citation until the end of the paragraph. You do not need to put a citation after every sentence in this case.

You usually do not need to cite a source when you are referencing a commonly known or agreed-upon fact, e.g., "On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland." When in doubt about whether or not to cite something, contact your teacher for clarification.

A properly-cited quotation:

Aristotle claims that "contemplation alone seems to be liked for its own sake, since nothing results from it apart from the fact that one has contemplated, whereas from the practical virtues, to a greater or lesser extent, we gain something beyond the action." (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1177b1-4)

A properly-cited reference:

Aristotle claims that the practical virtues are not liked for their own sake because we gain something from doing them whereas we must like contemplation for its own sake because we gain nothing from it besides having contemplated. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1177b1–4)

Cheating

If you pass off others' work as your own or if you help someone else do so, you are guilty of cheating.

For example, if you give your assignment to another student to copy, that student is guilty of plagiarism; you are guilty of cheating. To give another example, if you give another student the answer to an assignment or on a test, but nothing is literally copied, it is not plagiarism, but you are both still guilty of cheating.

In general, you should not show your assignments to other students, unless it is to receive basic feedback or help editing, and you should never show your assignments to students whom you do not trust not to copy them. If a student copies your assignments, it is your responsibility.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *I did not know the policy, and plagiarized or cheated by accident. Can't this be forgiven?*

In short: No.

All students entering BISLA are informed of the plagiarism and cheating policy during orientation. The official policy is available in PDF upon request and sometimes is even made available in core courses on MOODLE.

It is your responsibility to know the policy and to avoid plagiarism and cheating. If you missed the orientation, it is your responsibility to inform yourself of what you missed.

Whenever in doubt, contact your teacher or tutor for advice *before* turning in your assignment.

2. *I took a few words from a source without citing them. It was honest mistake. Am I guilty of plagiarism or cheating?*

Teachers are not looking for any tiny mistake that could be construed as plagiarism or cheating.

If you use a few words from the text you are studying without quotation marks, it is quite reasonable to conclude that it is an accident. If you cite a sentence or two from the text you are studying, but forget to use quotation marks, that, again, is possibly an accident. In these cases you are guilty of plagiarism. However, the teacher may just give you a warning. To be safe, you should simply make sure such "accidents" never happen.

That said, if you regularly take long passages from a source without quotation marks, that is no accident. It is intentional plagiarism. Moreover, if you copy all or part of another student's assignment, it is also plagiarism. Claiming that you discussed it and then just accidentally wrote several identical sentences is not a plausible excuse.

If you allow another student to copy your work, you are not guilty of plagiarism, but you are guilty of cheating and the penalty will be equally severe.

3. *Will teachers ask me to prove I've written every assignment myself? Should I fear writing a good assignment lest I be accused of plagiarism or cheating?*

To repeat, teachers are not looking for any tiny mistake that could be construed as plagiarism or cheating. If you regularly turn in high quality assignments and you demonstrate comprehension and insight by asking and answering questions in class, there is little to fear. If you suddenly show a remarkable improvement in comprehension and writing skill in your assignments, especially when it is not attended by any similar improvement in in-class performance, you may be suspected of plagiarism or cheating.

In such cases, the teacher may require you to answer some questions, verbal or written, about the topic of the assignment or about the assignment itself. The standard here, as always, is what is reasonable. Obviously, you might forget the details of an answer after you have written it. That said, if you hand in an informed, well-written answer, and, when asked, you cannot remember even the most basic details of the text, that suggests you did not read the text and therefore are not handing in your own work.

In general, teachers should only exercise this policy when an assignment plainly appears to not be the work of the student who has handed it in.

4. *In writing an assignment, can I seek information, insights, opinions, etc., from other sources? What about using lecture and seminar notes when writing an assignment?*

In general, always assume a teacher does not want you to use any sources besides those used in class unless that teacher explicitly tells you to do so.

It is usually not considered plagiarism to use information, insights or opinions drawn from lectures and seminars. However, you should ask your teacher to what extent he or she wishes you to use such information drawn from class and whether your teacher requires you to cite it.

5. *Can I discuss the texts we study with others? Can I ask for help understanding a text? Could this be considered plagiarism or cheating?*

Your understanding of the text should be based on: [a] the text itself, [b] your own analysis, [c] your discussions with others at BISLA (teachers other than the teacher of your course are fine, too), and [d] class lectures and discussion.

Your understanding of the text should not be based on anything else, that is, it should not be based on other books, articles, internet sources, etc.—unless the teacher explicitly asks you to examine such sources.

If you have read the text and discuss it (or the assignment) with your friends, that is not plagiarism or cheating. In fact, you should discuss it with your friends. This kind of exchange and collaboration is what BISLA is all about. If you have read the text, you may also discuss it with people outside of BISLA, of course.

However, these people should not be giving you the answers to your assignments or writing your papers for you. The standard remains the same as the above: If a teacher suspects you of plagiarism or cheating and you cannot answer basic questions about the text, topic or your own work, then the work is not likely yours.

6. *Can I ask one of my classmates for help writing an assignment? What about the writing tutorial?*

You are permitted to ask your classmates or others for help writing an assignment. Moreover, BISLA has a writing tutorial conducted by students tasked specifically with offering such help. That said, there are strict limits to how far that help can go.

✓ It is OK to get advice on your assignments. As indicated above, advice on the content (or the ideas) of your assignment is fine provided you have read the text and have worked significantly on the answers yourself. Advice on the English style and grammar of your assignment is also fine if the suggested changes do not significantly rephrase your work or if they are very general (e.g. your proofreader gives you general advice about how to use the definite article).

✗ It is *not* OK if someone makes so many changes to your paper that any part of it starts to become his or her work, not yours. There may be some confusion as to how many changes are too many. The assignment should be almost completely your own work (again, discussions with friends—if you have read the text—are fine).

✗ It is *not* OK to take something written by someone else and simply to put it in your own words (unless you cite it, as explained above).

✗ It is *not* OK to translate anything (including the text you are studying) from another language (such as Slovak or German) into English and then to pass it off as your own work. This has actually happened.

✗ It is *not* OK to copy text from a different version or translation of the work we are reading and then to pass it off as your own work. This, too, has actually happened.

✗ It is *not* OK to use the exact wording of any source (book, article, web page, etc.) without quotation marks and a proper citation indicating where the quotation comes from (author, title of the work, page number or, when appropriate, web address).

The five situations above are all plagiarism.

To repeat, whenever in doubt, contact your teacher or tutor for advice *before* turning in your assignment. We are here to help you. It is your responsibility, but also your prerogative, to make use of that help.