



## Policy on Copying and Plagiarism of Computer Program Submissions

### Introduction

The University of Cape Town has well defined policies on the copying of academic submission and plagiarism, which are contained in the general Rules for Students and set out in full on the web at: [www.uct.ac.za/uct/policies/plagiarism\\_students.pdf](http://www.uct.ac.za/uct/policies/plagiarism_students.pdf). The Department of Computer Science has set out the following guide and interpretation of these rules and policies as they apply to courses involving computer programming, and the use of the computer. The rules defined here are in line with the best procedures in other institutions and in particular are adapted from those on academic dishonesty at Oregon State University<sup>1</sup> and academic and cheating at San Francisco State University<sup>2</sup>

### What is Copying and Plagiarism of Computer Program Submissions

Copying and plagiarism of computer program submissions

- is presenting, as your own work, material produced by or in collaboration with others, or
- permitting or assisting others to present your work as their own

**without proper acknowledgment**

The purpose of the tuition in the Computer Science Department is to enable you, the student, to understand the work that you have submitted. As Confucius once said “I hear – I forget, I see – I remember, I do - I understand”. Thus you are required to do your own work for an assignment in order to ensure that you understand it.

### Guidelines for Determining Copying or Plagiarism

The following guidelines are provided to help in determining if an incident of copying or plagiarism has occurred.

- The lecturer may suspect a student of program plagiarism if the student submits a program that is so similar to the program submitted by a present or past student, in whole or in part, in the course that the solutions may be converted to one another by a simple mechanical transformation.
- The lecturer may suspect a student of cheating, whether on a program or an examination, if the student cannot explain both the intricacies of his or her solution and the techniques and principles used to generate that solution.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cs.oregonstate.edu/acad/policies/dishonesty.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://cs.sfsu.edu/plagarism.html>

The following general policy on cooperation on practical assignments which will be adhered to is:

In all circumstances it is acceptable to discuss the meaning of assignments and general approaches and strategies for handling those assignments with other members of the Academic Community.

Any cooperation beyond that point, including shared pseudocode or flowcharts, shared code, or shared documentation, is only acceptable if specifically so permitted by the lecturer in written guidelines distributed to the entire class, either through printed handouts or on the course web notes or news group, or where the student submitting the assignment sets out in full what part(s) are the work of others.

## **Penalty for Academic Cheating or Plagiarism**

In all cases where copying or plagiarism is suspected, is tested, and is deemed to have occurred, no credit will be given for the assignment in question and a record will be kept in the Computer Science Department office. A report will also be submitted to the Vice-Chancellor's office for possible disciplinary action through the University Disciplinary Tribunal, which may include expulsion, suspension, or probation; as well as lesser sanctions. In all cases the rule of law will apply and students will have the right to be heard by the lecturer, the course convener and the Head of Department before any action is finalized.

## **Identifying Copying and Plagiarism in Computer Program Submissions**

As the Computer Science Department believes strongly that students should only get credit for their own work, it will take all necessary steps to identify any cases of copying and plagiarism of computer submissions. These could include

- Submitting program files to plagiarism detection sites, either locally or internationally
- Setting a test on the techniques used in a program
- Requesting students to explain sections of their code

If you have any doubt or if you have any questions, you should consult with your lecturer as to whether or not your work with other students and programs prepared for submission are appropriate.

## **Examples of Copying or Plagiarism**

The following examples illustrate situations when Academic Cheating and/or Plagiarism has and has not occurred. Please note these lists are not comprehensive!

### **Copying and/or Plagiarism has occurred:**

- When a student turns in the work of another student and represents it as his or her own work.
- When a student includes another person's work in their own submission without setting out in full what part(s) are the work of others.
- When a student knowingly permits another to turn in his work.
- When a student copies code from the work of another student.
- When a student deliberately transforms borrowed sections of code in order to disguise their origin.
- When several students collaborate on a project and fail to inform the lecturer of this.

- When a student steals, obtains solutions, or program samples from another student's output or computer directories.
- When a student is unable to explain the working of a piece of code.

### **Copying or Plagiarism has NOT occurred:**

- When students have permission to collaborate on a project, and list all collaborators.
- When students receive advice from tutors, teaching assistants, or staff members involved in the course.
- When students share knowledge about syntax errors, coding tricks, or other language-specific information that makes programming easier, except where such techniques represent the core topics being tested in the assignment.
- When students engage in a general discussion of the nature of an assignment, the requirements for an assignment, or general implementation strategies.
- When students compare independent solutions to an assignment in order to better understand the nature of the assignment.
- When students engage in discussion of course concepts or programming strategies in preparation for an assignment or examination.
- When students copy code and cite its source on assignments for which the lecturer allows inclusion of code other than the student's own.

### **Conclusion**

The Computer Science Department believes that by encouraging students to submit their own work and, where possible, removing instances of copying and plagiarism of computer program submissions from the courses we can better help weaker students to overcome their problems and guarantee that work actually done is correctly rewarded.