HONOR CODE

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

Ratified by the MSU Student Senate, December 1, 2006
Ratified by the MSU Graduate Council, January 26, 2007
Ratified by the MSU Faculty Senate, February 9, 2007
Approved by MSU President, February 15, 2007

“As a Mississippi State University student I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Mississippi State University Honor Code
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:
The MSU Academic Integrity Assessment Committee reviewed honor codes from various institutions across the country as best practices in developing the MSU Honor Code. Particular acknowledgement is extended to The University of Maryland-College Park, Kansas State University, Texas A&M University, Duke University, Western Michigan University and The University of Colorado-Boulder for the inspiration and guidance that their honor codes provided to the work of the MSU Academic Integrity Assessment Committee (specific references are noted at the end of the document).
I. RULES PERTAINING TO THE MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE

I. A. INTRODUCTION
Mississippi State University is dedicated to the discovery, development, communication and application of knowledge in a wide range of academic and professional fields and assumes as its historic trust the maintenance of freedom of inquiry and an intellectual environment nurturing the human mind and spirit. The MSU Honor Code is critical to these ideals, to the goal of assuming a place of preeminence in higher education, and to the development of the whole student.

I. B. COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY
Academic dishonesty is a corrosive force in the academic life of a university. It jeopardizes the quality of education and depreciates the genuine achievements of others. It is, without reservation, a responsibility of all members of the Mississippi State University community to actively deter it. Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of academic dishonesty is not a neutral act -- failure to confront and deter it will reinforce, perpetuate, and enlarge the scope of such misconduct.

As such, a primary responsibility assumed by Mississippi State students is to discourage violations of the MSU Honor Code by others. Various methods of discouragement exist including drawing attention to a suspected violation and moral suasion. Initiating formal procedures is an expected remedy when other methods are inappropriate or have failed. Self-reporting is encouraged and may be considered a mitigating circumstance in the sanctioning phase of a particular case.

Additionally, faculty and staff share in the responsibility and authority to challenge and make known acts that violate the MSU Honor Code. Faculty are expected to take proactive steps to promote academic integrity including, but not limited to, adding language to their syllabi that describes prohibited behavior and the consequences of such activity; and, having an open discussion about academic integrity with students in their courses early in the semester. Additionally, faculty members are expected to adhere to the policy pertaining to the reporting and adjudication of violations of the MSU Honor Code. Initiating formal procedures is a necessary and obligatory component of this shared responsibility.

Collaboration and sharing information are characteristics of academic communities. These become violations when they involve dishonesty or are used in ways that give a student an unfair advantage. Faculty members should make clear to students their expectations about collaboration and information sharing. Students should seek clarification when in doubt.
I. C. DEFINITIONS OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Summary: Places the responsibility for authenticating students’ work on the students. Defines the various forms of academic dishonesty.

Misconduct in research or scholarship includes fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research or other academic work. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data.

Mississippi State University students are responsible for authenticating any assignment submitted to an instructor or graduate committee, excluding examinations. If asked, a student must be able to produce proof that the assignment submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor or graduate committee request it, is sufficient grounds to initiate an academic dishonesty case.

Commission of any of the following acts shall constitute academic dishonesty. This listing is not, however, exclusive of any other acts that may reasonably be said to constitute scholastic dishonesty. Clarification is provided for each definition with a listing of some prohibited behaviors.

1. Cheating: Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise.

Clarification:
   a. Students completing any examination are prohibited from looking at another student's examination and from using external aids (for example, books, notes, calculators, conversation with others, electronic devices) unless specifically allowed in advance by the instructor.
   b. Students may not have others conduct research or prepare work for them without advance authorization from the instructor.
   c. Students may not acquire answers for any assigned work or examination from any unauthorized source. This includes, but is not limited to, the services of commercial term paper companies; purchasing answer sets to homework from tutoring companies; and students who have previously taken the examination.
   d. Collaboration with other students in the completion of assigned work is also prohibited unless specifically authorized by course instructor. Students should assume that all assignments are to be completed individually unless the instructor indicates otherwise.

2. Fabrication: Making up data or results and recording or reporting them.

Clarification:
   a. The intentional invention and unauthorized alteration of any information or citation in any academic exercise.
b. "Invented" information shall not be used in any laboratory experiment, report of results or academic exercise. It would be improper, for example, to analyze one sample in an experiment and then "invent" data based on that single experiment for several more required analyses.

c. Students shall acknowledge the actual source from which cited information was obtained. For example, a student shall not take a quotation from a book review and then indicate that the quotation was obtained from the book itself.

d. Changing information on tests, quizzes, examinations, reports, or any other material that has been graded and resubmitting it as original for the purpose of improving the grade on that material.

3. Falsification: Manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research or academic work is not accurately represented in the research or work record.

4. Multiple Submission: The submission of substantial portions of the same work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without authorization from the instructor of the class for which the student submits the work.

Clarification:

a. Submitting the same paper for credit in more than one course in the same semester without the instructor's permission.

b. Making revisions in a paper or report (including oral presentations) which has been submitted and graded in a previous semester and submitting it for credit in another class without the instructor’s permission.

c. Representing group work done in one class as one’s own work for the purpose of using it in another class.

5. Plagiarism: The appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

Clarification:

a. Intentionally, knowingly, or carelessly presenting the work of another as one’s own (i.e., without proper credit).

b. Failing to credit sources used in a work product in an attempt to pass off the work as one’s own.

c. Attempting to receive credit for work performed by another, including papers obtained in whole or in part from individuals or other sources.

d. The internet, data bases and other electronic resources must be cited if they are utilized in any way as resource material in an academic exercise.

General information pertaining to plagiarism:

a. Faculty members are responsible for identifying any specific style/format requirement for the course. Examples include, but are not limited to, American
Psychological Association (APA) style and Modern Languages Association (MLA) style.
b. Direct Quotation: Every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and must be properly acknowledged in the text by citation or in a footnote or endnote.
c. Paraphrase: Prompt acknowledgment is required when material from another source is paraphrased or summarized, in whole or in part, in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "To paraphrase Locke's comment,..." and then conclude with a footnote or endnote identifying the exact reference.
d. Borrowed facts: Information gained in reading or research, which is not common knowledge, must be acknowledged.
e. Common knowledge: Common knowledge includes generally known facts such as the names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc. Materials, which add only to a general understanding of the subject, may be acknowledged in the bibliography and need not be footnoted or endnoted.
f. Footnotes, endnotes, and in-text citations: One footnote, endnote, or in-text citation is usually enough to acknowledge indebtedness when a number of connected sentences are drawn from one source. When direct quotations are used, however, quotation marks must be inserted and acknowledgment made. Similarly, when a passage is paraphrased, acknowledgment is required.

6. Complicity: Intentionally or knowingly helping, or attempting to help, another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Clarification:
a. Knowingly allowing another to copy from one's paper during an examination or test.
b. Distributing test questions or substantive information about the materials to be tested without the instructor’s permission.
c. Collaborating on academic work knowing that the collaboration will not be reported.
d. Taking an examination or test for another student.
e. Signing another's name on an academic exercise.
f. Conspiring or agreeing with one or more persons to commit, or attempting to commit, any act of scholastic dishonesty.

7. Violation of Departmental or College Rules: Students may not violate any announced departmental or college rule relating to academic matters including, but not limited to, abuse or misuse of computer access or information in any academic exercise.
I. D. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY SANCTIONS

Summary:
Establishes the authority of the Honor Code Council to assign any applicable MSU sanction, including grade sanctions and separation from the University.
Establishes the “XF” or “Dishonesty F” grade in the course as the normal sanction for a first offense.
Establishes the authority of faculty members (instructors of record) to assign an XF grade penalty, probation, and referral to the Academic Integrity Intervention Program.
Establishes the authority of Graduate Committees to assign sanctions up to removal from the University.

Instances of academic misconduct represent behavior that is of an especially serious nature. Sanctions assigned for academic misconduct should convey the message that this type of behavior serves as a destructive force within the academic community. However a range of sanctions can be employed in order to strike an appropriate balance between sending a message of accountability and enhancing a student’s moral and cognitive development.

The Honor Code Council is empowered with assigning sanctions that are outlined within Mississippi State University’s Policies. These sanctions include separation from the institution, probationary status, and documentation that a violation has occurred. In addition, the Honor Code Council is also empowered to assign appropriate academic and/or educational sanctions based upon the specifics of the incident. Examples of appropriate academic sanctions include receiving a failing grade or other grade penalty for the course for academic misconduct. Educational sanctions include requiring a student to complete the Academic Integrity Intervention Program.

Faculty members may assign sanctions up to an XF in the course, probation and referral to the Academic Integrity Intervention Program. In cases involving graduate students, the Graduate Committee may assign sanctions up to separation from the institution. There may be additional consequences for a student within their academic major based upon an involvement in academic misconduct. Students are encouraged to discuss their involvement in an academic misconduct situation with their academic advisor. While this list is not designed to be exhaustive, it demonstrates the wide range of sanctions that can be considered in cases of academic misconduct.

Sanctioning Guidelines:
When it is determined by the Honor Code Council or a faculty member that a student has violated the MSU Honor Code, the normal sanction assigned for a first offense will be an “XF” for the course, probation, and a requirement to complete the Academic Integrity Intervention Program. The Honor Code Council or faculty member will only impose a lesser grade sanction (a lowered course grade rather than an F) in exceptional circumstances, such as a case where the assignment involved is a minor part of the final course grade. The dishonesty notation (“X”), probation and the intervention program will be required with all grade sanctions. If a faculty member wishes to impose a more severe penalty than an XF, then the case must be referred to the Honor Code Council. The Honor Code Council has the authority to remove a student from the University, even for first offenses. Decisions by the Honor Code Council Hearing Panels are binding on all parties.
The grade of “XF” is intended to identify a student that has failed to uphold the values of academic integrity at Mississippi State University. The grade of “XF” shall be documented on the student’s transcript with the notation “failure due to academic dishonesty”. The grade of “XF” shall be treated the as an F for the purposes of calculating Grade Point Average and determination of academic class standing. Further, a student who receives a grade of an “XF” will be on disciplinary probation with the university for reasons of academic misconduct until such time as the Honor Code Council decides to remove the X.

In addition, a student who is determined to be responsible for a violation of the MSU Honor Code shall be required to successfully complete an Academic Integrity Intervention Program (see Appendix III) administered through the Honor Code Council Office. This requirement must be completed prior to a student being eligible to petition to have the grade of “XF” changed to an F on their transcript. This requirement must also be completed before the student is eligible to repeat the course in which the “XF” was assigned.

**Removal of XF Grade:**
The student must file a written petition to the Honor Code Council to have the grade of “XF” removed and permanently replaced with the grade of an F. The decision to replace the grade of “XF” will be considered by the Honor Code Council only on the student’s successful completion of the Academic Integrity Intervention Program. A student will remain on disciplinary probation until the notation of “XF” is removed from their transcript and replaced with an F. Additionally, the resulting F grade will not be eligible for any “grade forgiveness policy” and cannot be replaced for the calculation of a student’s Grade Point Average.

**Authority to Revoke a Degree:**
Mississippi State University has the authority to revoke the degree of a former student if a finding of academic dishonesty is determined after the student graduated. The basis for revocation of the degree would be if the sanction that is assigned for the dishonesty would have caused the student to be ineligible to receive the degree at the time.

The Honor Code Council will be responsible for investigating the allegation, conducting a hearing if appropriate, and determining the sanction in accordance with the MSU Honor Code. The Honor Code Council’s decision may be appealed under the provisions of the Honor Code. If a sanction is assigned to the former student, then the case is referred to the College that awarded the degree to determine if the sanction would have made the student ineligible for the degree. If the answer is no, then the record of the dishonesty is placed in the student’s record and on the transcript as appropriate. If the answer is yes, then the College Dean will recommend revocation of the degree to the Provost, who will make the final decision and notify the student, the College and the Honor Code Council. The decision by the Provost cannot be appealed.
II. PROCEDURES PERTAINING TO THE MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE

II. A. HONOR VIOLATION REPORTING

Summary:
Sets forth the procedures for reporting an alleged incident of academic misconduct.

Initiating formal procedures is a necessary and obligatory remedy when other methods are inappropriate or have failed. Any report will initiate some action by the Honor Code Council and can potentially lead to the initiation of a case. Reports may be made via electronic media, written letter, in person and/or telephone conversation. The preferred reporting method is electronically or in written format.

Reporting Procedures
Any person in the MSU academic community (students, faculty, staff and administration) shall report alleged incidents of academic dishonesty that come to their knowledge. Reports of alleged incidents of academic dishonesty may be reported to the Honor Code Council Office, to any member of the Honor Code Council, to the instructor of the course, any member of the graduate committee or any other faculty member, or any appropriate university official. Reports may be filed initially verbally, electronically or in writing. Upon receipt of such a report, any member of the university community is obligated to refer that report to the course instructor, graduate committee chair, or the Honor Code Council. The party responsible for investigating the case will contact the person reporting the alleged incident to learn additional details in order to pursue the case in accordance with Honor Code procedures.

II. B. HANDLING OF ALLEGED INCIDENTS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Summary:
Designates the Honor Code Council as the administrative coordination point for handling all cases of academic misconduct.

A faculty member of graduate committee may handle cases directly in the following situations:
1. It is a first time offense.
2. It is not anticipated to require a sanction greater than an XF.
3. The student does not request referral to the Honor Code Council.

A faculty member or the graduate committee may refer the case to the Honor Code Council at any point in the process.
The accused student may appeal the faculty member’s or graduate committee’s decision to the Honor Code Council.

The Honor Code Council Office will be the central office maintaining records and providing assistance with cases. Any member of the university community should call the Honor Code Council staff for clarification and assistance with alleged violations of the Honor Code. There are two options when reporting an alleged violation: Report the alleged violation to the Honor Code Council or to the faculty member or graduate committees responsible for the course or assignment in which the alleged violation occurred.
Faculty members or graduate committees have the option of turning the case over to the Honor Code Council or handling the case in the department. If the case is referred to the Honor Code Council, the faculty member completes the Honor Code Violation Report Form (pp. 19-20) and sends it to the Honor Code Council for further consideration within five (5) university business days of learning of the alleged incident. If the faculty member or graduate committee chooses to handle the case, they should contact the Honor Code Council to obtain a case number and follow the Faculty or Graduate Committee Process outlined on p.14.

Finally, students who are accused of an Honor Code violation may not drop the course in which there is suspicion of dishonesty. A class previously dropped may be reinstated in a student’s record if a violation is found to have occurred after the student successfully dropped the course. If academic dishonesty is determined and an XF grade is assigned while a course is still in session, the student is no longer eligible to attend the class, effective on the date of the decision.

II. C. HONOR CODE COUNCIL PROCESS:

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<td>This process applies to allegations of academic misconduct in undergraduate or graduate coursework, comprehensive exams, research projects, theses or dissertations, internships, or any other academic work.</td>
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<td>In all steps a graduate committee may function as the equivalent of a faculty member.</td>
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<td>Notification includes the department head or graduate coordinator, the dean for both the student and the course, if different, and the graduate dean, if the case involves a graduate student.</td>
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<td>The Director of the Honor Code Council may extend deadlines for extenuating circumstances.</td>
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Required documents for the case file:

1. Honor Code Council summary report form of interviews and other investigative activities.
2. Letter(s) from Director to alleged violator. Response letter(s) from alleged violator.

**Step 1**
A report filed with the Honor Code Council results in the beginning of a case file and notification of the parties involved, including the student, the faculty member or graduate committee, the department head or graduate coordinator and the dean(s).

Faculty members must report all infractions, those that are handled by the faculty member as well as those that will be handled by the Honor Code Council. The faculty member sends the report to the Honor Code Council Office within five (5) university business days of learning of the alleged incident.

**Step 2**
One student and one faculty case investigators are appointed. The Honor Code Council Director meets with case investigators and the reporting faculty member.

**Step 3**
The case investigators gather information from the reporting faculty member, such as syllabus and assignment guidelines and any materials that help clarify the case. The reporting faculty
member may also offer the names of others who have knowledge that could clarify the case. It is critical that all communication remain confidential.

**Step 4**
The case investigators meet with the accused student to gather information. The accused student is given the incident report during this meeting. The case investigators may also meet with other persons who have information about the case. The accused student may give the case investigators names of persons who may have clarifying information about the case. Interviews are conducted.

**Step 5**
The case investigators submit a report to the Honor Code Council Director summarizing all information collected and all interviews conducted. The report concludes with a recommendation on whether there is sufficient information to support the allegation of academic misconduct or not. If there is not sufficient information to support the allegation, the Honor Code Council Director creates an event file that contains no reference to the accused student’s name. If there is sufficient information to support the allegation the case continues to a hearing panel. Both the reporting faculty member and the accused student have the opportunity to review the report before the hearing.

**Step 6**
Six members of the Honor Code Council are selected to serve as a Hearing Panel. The Hearing Panel is comprised of three faculty members and two student members. These five members are voting members. A sixth member is selected as a non-voting Chair. The Chair position alternates between student and faculty Honor Code Council members. If the accused student is a graduate student, then only Honor Code Council members that are members of the graduate faculty and graduate students may serve on the Hearing Panel. If the accused student is a Veterinary Medicine professional student, then at least one professional student and one faculty member from Veterinary Medicine must serve on the Hearing Panel.

**Step 7**
A hearing date and time are set and all parties are notified. The Chair and Hearing Panel members receive an advanced copy of the case file in preparation for the hearing. Hearings will be conducted in accordance with applicable due process requirements.

**Step 8**
The Director furnishes a script for the hearing procedure. Hearing Panel members listen to all who provide information during the hearing and then deliberate in private. The Chair then announces the results to those present at the conclusion of the hearing. All decisions by the Honor Code Council Hearing Panels are binding on all parties.

**Step 9**
The Director notifies the student in writing of the Hearing Panel decision within 48 hours. Notification is sent to all parties involved in the case regarding the Hearing Panel’s decision, including the student, the faculty member or graduate committee, the department head or graduate coordinator and the dean(s).
**Appeal**

A student found responsible for academic misconduct has five (5) university business days after being notified of the decision to file an appeal in writing to the Director of the Honor Code Council. There are four bases of appeal:

1. Substantial new evidence not available at the time of the original hearing.
2. Procedural irregularities.
3. The sanction is not commensurate with the violation.
4. The finding of responsibility is inconsistent with the facts presented in the hearing.

For an appeal to be considered valid one or more bases of appeal must be cited and appropriately supported in the written appeal.

The Honor Code Council Director will evaluate the written appeal to determine whether an appeal hearing is warranted. If the appeal is granted, an Appeal Hearing Panel is formed following the same procedures as above. The members of the Appeal Hearing Panel shall be different than the members of the original hearing panel. Students are limited to one appeal per case. The decision of the Appeal Hearing Panel is final.

Case investigators are assigned and Director meets with all parties.

Case investigators investigate the alleged violation.

Case investigators submit summary report to Honor Code Council.

Case investigators determine if there is sufficient evidence to support the allegation of academic misconduct.

If there is not sufficient information to support the allegation an event file is created and the case is closed.

If the case investigators determine there is sufficient information to support the allegation of academic misconduct the case continues to a hearing panel.

Hearing panel comprised of three faculty members and two students is created.

Hearing is held and a decision is made.

Honor Code Council Director notifies the accused student of the decision within 48 hours. Other appropriate parties are notified.

Student has the right to appeal in writing within 5 business days.
II. D. FACULTY OR GRADUATE COMMITTEE PROCESS:

**Summary:**
This process applies to allegations of academic misconduct in undergraduate or graduate coursework, comprehensive exams, research projects, theses or dissertations, internships, or any other academic work. In all steps a graduate committee may function as the equivalent of a faculty member. Notification includes the department head or graduate coordinator, the dean for both the student and the course, if different, and the graduate dean, if the case involves a graduate student. The Director of the Honor Code Council may extend deadlines for extenuating circumstances.

**Step 1**
Upon learning of alleged academic misconduct, the faculty member shall contact the Honor Code Office to report the incident, begin a case file, and obtain background information on the accused student, if any. If the student has a previous record, the case is required to be referred to the Honor Code Council for further handling.

**Step 2**
If there is no previous record and the faculty member decides to handle the case individually, the faculty member will then meet with the accused student. In this meeting, the faculty member shall inform the student of the allegation and give the student the opportunity to be heard.

**Step 3**
After meeting with the accused student the faculty member will determine if academic misconduct has occurred. If no misconduct is found the case is dropped, no action against the student is taken, and the decision is reported to the Honor Code Council. If the faculty member determines that there has been academic misconduct, the faculty member determines the severity of the violation and assesses a sanction in accordance with Honor Code policies. The faculty member completes and submits the Honor Code Violation Report Form to the Honor Code Council.

NOTE: In cases involving undergraduate students, if the faculty member determines the violation deserves a greater penalty than an XF, the case must be referred to the Honor Code Council for adjudication. In cases involving graduate students, the graduate committee may impose sanctions up to removal from the University.

**Step 4**
The faculty member then meets with the student to notify him/her of the decision, the sanction, and of the appeal process. Each student is required to check one of the student response options on the Honor Code Violation Report Form and sign the form.

**Step 5**
If the student accepts responsibility for the academic misconduct and accepts the sanction assigned by the faculty member, the Honor Code Violation Report Form is sent to the Honor Code Council Director within five (5) University business days where it is included in the case file and the case is completed.
If the student indicates on the Honor Code Violation Report Form that they do not agree with the sanction or deny the misconduct occurred, the faculty member submits the Honor Code Violation Report Form and all applicable documentation to the Honor Code Council Director within five (5) University business days. This submission begins the appeal process (See Appeals process under the Honor Code Council Process).
FACULTY PROCESS
(Graduate Committee Process)

Faculty member has the option of handling the case individually or to refer the case to the Honor Code Council.

- Contact the Honor Code Council Office to report incident and check for previous record.
- Refer the case to the Honor Code Council by submitting report form and documentation.

- Meet with the accused student to inform them of the allegation and give them the opportunity to be heard.
- If the accused student has a previous record, the case is referred to the Honor Code Council.

- Determines misconduct has occurred. Determine severity and assess a sanction. Complete the Honor Code Violation Report Form.
- Determine there has been no misconduct. No action against student. Report submitted to Honor Code Council

- Meet with student to notify him/her of sanction and appeal process. Student must select an option on the Honor Code Violation Report Form.
- For undergraduate students, if the faculty member determines that a sanction greater than an XF should be assessed the case must be referred to the Honor Code Council for further action. Complete and submit the Honor Code Violation Report Form to the Honor Code Council.

- Student admits to misconduct and accepts the sanction.
- Student either denies the misconduct or disagrees with the sanction.

- Honor Code Violation Report Form is submitted to the Honor Code Council within 5 business days.
- Honor Code Violation Report Form is submitted to the Honor Code Council within 5 business days.

- Case is recorded and closed.
- Case enters the Honor Code Council appeals process.
REFERENCES

1. Adapted from the Texas A&M University Honor System, available at http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/


4. Adapted from Texas A&M University Honor System (Definitions), available at http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/Definitions

5. Adapted from Western Michigan University (Academic Dishonesty Definitions), available at http://www.osc.wmich.edu/academichonesty/definitionsofviolations.html

6. Adapted from Texas A&M University Honor System (Sanctions), available at http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/Sanctions.doc