

Case* #7: Copying old projects

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Allegation: Group A reused an old capstone project for their current year's project only changing the introduction. This assignment was worth 50% of the students' final grade.

Background: According to the Report on Academic Misconduct, the same capstone project was assigned for the last two consecutive years; however, students were expected to submit original work. The course instructor compared Group A's project to a submission from a previous year and found that they were identical, other than the introduction. The course instructor met with the group to discuss this issue. Student A admitted to suggesting that they reuse an old project from a friend.

All members of Group A agreed that Student A had suggested they reuse an old project to complete their capstone project. Only Student A took responsibility for his/her actions. The rest of the group felt as though they were cheated by Student A and that they should not be held accountable for his/her actions even though they all agreed to the plan.

Because the project was worth 50% of the total grade, the case was forwarded to the Faculty's Academic Integrity Committee. It was a first offence for all of the students and they were all in their fourth year of study. The Academic Integrity Committee met with each member of the group individually. Only Student A took responsibility for his actions; the remaining group members continued to blame Student A.

Decision: The Academic Integrity Committee determined that all members of the group were equally to blame and imposed a sanction of a failing grade for the project. No notation would be placed on the transcript.

Rationale: Given the severity and purposeful nature of the offence, the Committee determined that a sanction of 0% for the project was appropriate. When students are in their fourth year of study, it is expected that they clearly understand the nature of plagiarism and other forms of cheating and that they understand the consequences for violating the Code of Academic Conduct. All members of the group received the same penalty because all members took part in the deception. The instigator took responsibility, but all members have of the group also has a responsibility to ensure the integrity of any project submitted under their names. A failure on an assignment worth 50% of the total grade is a significant penalty since it would be impossible to pass the course with only half the grades.

*Case studies are based on examples of common problems with academic misconduct. All names and identifying information have been removed.