

COLLABORATION

The default policy on collaboration at MSU is **no collaboration**: all student work should be done individually – this is the default in CHBE as well. This means that if multiple students turn in assignments that clearly indicate that they collaborated, those students have violated MSU’s Student Code of Conduct and are subject to disciplinary action.

The common interpretation of the no collaboration policy is that:

- It is OK to discuss an assignment with others so long as the solution is prepared individually.
- It is OK to ask others for help so long as they provide instruction on how to solve a problem, not the solution to the problem.

TAKE-HOME EXAMS

The exception to this interpretation is take-home examinations for which no collaboration means no communication about the exam or the subject matter of the exam with anyone except the instructor.

TEAMWORK

The CHBE faculty recognize that most engineering work is performed as part of a team, and many instructors will allow, encourage, or even require collaboration – but you need to be aware that the policy is **no collaboration unless explicitly permitted by the instructor**.

Your instructor may allow various levels of collaboration, such as:

1. No collaboration, no communication – work individually.
2. Communicating with other students is allowed, but each student completes the assignment separately. [Turning in identical work would not be allowed in this case.]
3. Working problems together is allowed, but each student must turn in their own copy of the solution. [Turning in identical solutions would be allowed in this case.]
4. Working problems together is allowed, but each group must turn in one copy of the solution with every participant’s name.
5. Working problems as a team is required. Turn in one solution per team.

If you have questions about what amount of collaboration may be allowed, ask. Remember that the default is no collaboration.

Note:

- Adding your name to the solution prepared by others is not collaborating; it is cheating.
- Copying the solution of another is not collaboration; it is cheating. If you have someone else’s permission to copy their work; you are both cheating.

CHEATING

It is not allowed; don’t do it.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own, and it is not allowed.

That said, you should understand that:

- You are allowed to incorporate small portions of someone else's work (typically in a report or presentation) as long as you clearly indicate that it is their work, not yours; you must cite the referenced author's work.
- You are allowed to learn from other's work and present the information in your own words. If the idea in the sentence you are typing into your report is not your own, cite the referenced author's work.
- You can use someone else's exact words in your report – just enclose their words in quotes and cite the referenced author's work. The quote should be a small portion of your total report (a sentence or two, not a section.)
- If you are copying and pasting from someone else's work (e.g., papers, reports, presentations or websites), you are probably plagiarizing. The only exception would be copying a sentence or two and including it in your report in quotes, with a reference to the author's work.
- You are allowed to perform a new analysis using someone else's publically published data – as long as you reference the original publication containing the data. You must have the original author's permission before publically (i.e., beyond a classroom) re-publishing the data with the new analysis.

There are times when it is not allowed to use the work of others, even with acknowledgement. For example:

- Looking at your neighbor's exam and writing down his or her solution is not allowed, even if you reference their exam as your source.
- If your instructor expects (even by default) an assignment to be completed without collaboration, using the work of others is not allowed, even if it is acknowledged.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU ARE CAUGHT?

If you are caught collaborating improperly, cheating, or plagiarizing, your instructor may take any of the following actions (as per the MSU Code of Student Conduct):

- A. oral reprimand
- B. written reprimand (in your student file – it will follow you through the University)
- C. an assignment to repeat the work or an alternate assignment
- D. a lower or failing grade on the particular assignment or test
- E. a lower grade or failing grade in the course

The instructor may respond directly, or he/she may turn the case over to the department head. The most common action is to give you a zero on the assignment or examination, but more severe actions are allowed.

Note: *If you improperly allow someone to copy your work and turn it in as their own, you are also guilty of academic misconduct and may well face the same disciplinary actions as the person who copied your work.*

CONCLUSION

Please understand that these rules are not particularly burdensome, we simply ask that you do your own work when required, and acknowledge the source when you incorporate the work of others. But we do take academic misconduct seriously.