

Scenario 1

Sarah is accused of violating the collaboration policy for an organic chemistry class. The homework requires students to come up with a reasonable synthesis for a target molecule. The collaboration policy states that students may work together, and may consult textbooks and the Internet, but that their solutions should be prepared independently.

Sarah's homework was flagged as suspicious because her syntheses closely matched the published ones which inspired the problems. In the interview, Sarah admits to finding those papers online and using them to write her answers, but says she does not think that action violates the collaboration policy.

Scenario 2

Matt and Rob are accused of violating the collaboration policy for an engineering class. The collaboration policy states that students may work together on their homework, but should prepare their solutions independently. Matt and Rob each turned in a set of solutions that were nearly identical, with changes only in some variable names.

When interviewed, Matt states that he and Rob collaborated the night before the homework was due, and he finished his solutions while he was there. Matt asked Rob to turn in his homework so he could sleep in, and Rob agreed. Matt says he trusted Rob to honor the collaboration policy, and that he never looked at Rob's solutions, only discussed them verbally.

In his interview, Rob mostly agrees with Matt's account of events. He says he had not yet finished his homework when Matt went home and left his solutions. It was getting late, so Rob looked at Matt's solutions for help. Rob says he didn't mean for his solutions to come out looking so similar to Matt's, but was just using them as a reference since Matt wasn't around to discuss them anymore.

Scenario 3

Peter and Natalie are accused of plagiarism in a computer science class. The collaboration policy states that students may collaborate as much as they like, but each student must write their own code. Peter and Natalie each turned in code that was completely identical in large sections.

When interviewed, Peter says that he collaborated with Natalie often because he was struggling with the class. He says that Natalie would let him look at her code whenever he had problems writing a difficult method, and that the identical sections are ones he wrote based on Natalie's. However, Peter doesn't think his coding is plagiarism because he and Natalie were using the same variable names set by the instructor, so their code couldn't possibly be different and still work.

In her interview, Natalie agrees with Peter's story, but says she thought Peter was using her code as a reference. She thinks Peter plagiarized her work inappropriately, but doesn't think that allowing Peter to see her code violated the collaboration policy.

Scenario 4

Paul is accused of plagiarism in a biology class. On the final exam, the collaboration policy says that there will be no collaboration between students, but the exam is open-book, open-note—the only forbidden resource is the internet. The exam contained several questions which asked for drawings of cell signaling pathways, which Paul answered by including pictures directly from the book and lecture notes, which he was able to do because he chose to prepare his answers on his computer.

When interviewed, Paul is shown two questions in particular that he answered that way. He admits that he took the pictures directly from the book and lecture notes, and says he thinks that that is an appropriate way to answer the questions since he would have just been copying down the picture by hand anyway. When the co-chairs ask him about citations, he points out that he did cite the picture from the textbook by including the title and page number. Paul does not think he needs to cite the lecture notes, since everyone in the class would recognize where the picture came from.

(You should vote separately on whether each form of answering the question constitutes plagiarism and therefore an honor code violation.)