

EK 100 Ethics
Code of Conduct Case Discussion

Disclaimer: This series of questions is based on a real academic conduct case at the Boston University College of Engineering. Names and dates have been omitted to protect the parties involved. Some details of the story have been fabricated for educational purposes.

I. You are invited to work with a group of students on a homework set in one of your classes. You have some of it done, but there are a few answers that you don't know. What do you do?

II. You are working on the homework problem from scenario I in a small group, when one person claims that s/he downloaded the solutions to the homework set from an anonymous website. S/he pulls out the solutions and begins explaining one of the more challenging problems to the group. What do you do?

III. You have completed the homework assignment. You review your answers and feel satisfied with them. The person with the homework solutions offers that s/he has the solutions on a flash drive. This person offers the solutions to the group, explaining that the answers are a great way to verify that your approach to the problem is correct. What do you do?

IV. Weeks after submitting the homework above, you are working on another homework assignment. It's 10pm when you encounter a road bump in the assignment. You don't know how to continue. The homework is due tomorrow. What do you do?

V. You are at a ½ hour break between classes so you decide to check your email. You are surprised to see a message that reads:

"There is an issue regarding one of your classes from last semester. Please come to my office this afternoon. Please do not discuss this meeting with anyone else. ~ Undergraduate Programs Office"

What do you do?

VI. During the meeting with a representative from the Undergraduate Programs Office and the academic conduct committee chair, you are asked about the solution set and specifically the homework assignment from scene IV. What do you do?

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SA / FA Edition (Discussion comments noted in bold)

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Give students one question at a time (verbally, on a card, etc.) so students can not move ahead. Allow the group to discuss their actions/approach to each question and then continue to the next scenario.

- I. You are invited to work with a group of students on a homework set in one of your classes. You have some of it done, but there are a few answers that you don't know. What do you do?

Leave this open-ended and see how students respond.

- II. You are working on the homework problem from scenario I in a small group, when one person claims that s/he downloaded the solutions to the homework set from an anonymous website. S/he pulls out the solutions and begins explaining one of the more challenging problems to the group. What do you do?

Do students see anything wrong with listening to someone's explanation when it is based on the answer in the solution manual? Do students start copying the answers, speak up that this is cheating, leave the room, etc.? If students use the solution manual, how do they know the solutions are correct?

- III. You have completed the homework assignment. You review your answers and feel satisfied with them. The person with the homework solutions offers that s/he has the solutions on a flash drive. This person offers the solutions to the group, explaining that the answers are a great way to verify that your approach to the problem is correct. What do you do?

Again, leave this open-ended and see how students respond.

- IV. Weeks after submitting the homework assignment above, you are working on homework #2. It's 10pm when you encounter a road bump in the assignment. You don't know how to continue. The homework is due tomorrow. What do you do?

If students took the solutions from the flash drive, explore whether they use it. How do students know the solutions are correct?

If students did not take the solutions from the flash drive, do they contact someone in class who does have it? Do they search the web to find the solutions themselves? Do they struggle through on their own?

- V. You are at a ½ hour break between classes so you decide to check your email. You are surprised to see a message that reads:
"There is an issue regarding one of your classes from last semester. Please come see me this afternoon. Please do not discuss this meeting with anyone else. ~ Undergraduate Programs Office"
What do you do?

Do students call the others from the study group? What is going on in your mind?

- VI. During the meeting with a representative from the Undergraduate Programs Office and the academic conduct committee chair, you are asked about the solution set and specifically the homework assignment from scene IV. What do you do?

Explain that at such a meeting, it is you, the professor, the UGRAD representative and the chair of the Academic Conduct Committee. The evidence of the homework solution is presented. In this explanation, you are told that the solutions manual to one of the problems was wrong (i.e. the problem asks for a 4' pole and the solutions manual, and your homework, uses a 7' pole). How is it that your homework matches the incorrect solutions manual? You are asked:

Did you have the solutions manual?
Did you use the solutions manual on this homework problem?
(If no, how do you explain this error on your homework?)
How did you get the solutions manual?

As students deliberate, you can probe them with:

Do you dodge what really happened?

Do you explain it all, realizing you have been caught?

If you were a student on the academic conduct committee of such a case, what sanction would you impose (warning, probation, suspension, expulsion) and for how many semesters?