Welcome to Canada and to North Island College (NIC). Studying in a foreign country can be a wonderful experience, but a huge part of that experience is dealing with a new context and the unknowns it contains. As an international student, during your time at NIC you will be faced with a range of new experiences: a new place, a new climate, new food, new people, and a new culture. “Culture” is a broad term that covers almost every aspect of how we live our lives. As you study at NIC, you will find yourself not only living in a general Canadian culture, but also studying in a particular Canadian academic culture. Understanding and learning to work within that culture will be critical elements in your success as a student. One of the most important parts of Canadian academic culture is the notion of **academic integrity**.

**Academic Integrity: What is it and why is it important?**

In a Canadian college or university every student is expected to have and demonstrate academic integrity. Academic integrity is basically a commitment to effort and honesty. As such, it applies to everyone in a college or university, not only students but also faculty and administration. For students it means trying your very best to fulfill your obligations and to be successful, while being honest to your teachers, your peers, yourself, and to the greater academic community that you are now a part of.

Academic integrity is considered to be essential to learning. Without it, students will not get the maximum benefit from their studies, and if they are dishonest, they risk losing marks, failing courses, and even being expelled.

What are the characteristics of academic integrity? Can you list a few of them?

Here are some that a Canadian teacher or student might include:

- attending classes
- being punctual
- doing homework/ assignments on time and to the best your ability
- studying hard
- working well with others when required (and allowed)
- contributing to classes and group work
- not cheating on exams/quizzes
- doing your own work (not copying from others or misrepresenting other people’s work as your own)
- crediting the sources you get your information (not plagiarizing)
• taking responsibility for your own education and learning

Academic Integrity: A Question of Culture

Now, you will probably recognize and agree with many of the points on the above list, but may not be 100% certain as to exactly what some of the others mean. One of the experiences of learning is that there is always more you can learn about a particular topic or phenomenon. This is particularly true about culture, where there are layers of understanding and where you quickly learn that your understanding about a cultural phenomenon is incomplete or even dead wrong.

Different societies value, accept or penalize different behaviours. Similarly, academic culture may differ from society to society, and even within different contexts in the same society. For example, there is a big difference between the culture and expectations Canadian students face in high schools and what they face in universities. Also, within colleges and universities, faculty and students may have different views of academic integrity. To explore this a little more fully look at the two situations below.

Scenario 1

A student steals an exam and shares it with other students before the test.

- Is this appropriate?
- If the teacher/administration finds out what happened, should anyone be punished?

AND

Scenario 2

A group of students form a study group. When their instructor gives them a major assignment/take-home exam, they work on it together, but each student writes his/her own paper and hands it in.

- Is this appropriate?
- If the teacher/administration finds out what happened, should anyone be punished?
Most students, no matter which culture they come from, would say that the students in Scenario 1 are being dishonest and not demonstrating academic integrity. Everyone would probably also agree that all of the students involved should be punished. However, Scenario 2 is not so simple and clear. There are a number of factors involved, including the instructor’s exact instructions and expectations, as well as the degree of collaboration between the students. And the appropriateness of the latter might be seen differently by different cultures and even by different instructors within the same culture.

**Collaboration vs. Collusion**
Most Canadian programs encourage collaboration between the students in their programs. Students work together in class, form study groups, and do group projects together. However, there are limits on what is acceptable. Generally, unless your instructor says otherwise, you are expected to do your own work, particularly for assignments, and you are not allowed to say that other people’s work is your own, even if they give it to you willingly.

**Individualistic vs. Collectivist Cultures**
Hofstede (1983) examined what differentiates national cultures. One of the major differences he found was the individualist and collectivist nature of cultures. Individualist cultures emphasize the importance, rights and interests of the individual while collectivist cultures emphasize the importance and well-being of the group or society. To see a summary of the characteristics of these cultural types, go to the following link:

http://www.andrews.edu/~tidwell/bsad560/HofstedeIndividualism.html
(Tidwell)

Read through the document to answer this question: Is the culture you come from collectivist or individualistic? What about Canadian culture?

Hofstede and most other cross-cultural experts agree that Canada is an individualistic society, and as such Canadian society places great value on individual initiative and responsibility. This extends to academic culture. In Canada students are expected to do their own work, and, unless the instructor says otherwise, a student is expected do all aspects of an assignment himself/herself.

If you are from a collectivist culture, you may find it difficult to see where the boundaries are, particularly the line where collaboration (cooperation) becomes collusion (inappropriate cooperation). What is just fine in your academic culture may be a step too far at NIC. To make matters more difficult, in many contexts your instructors want you to collaborate, and even grading you on that cooperation. Furthermore, each person’s work or ideas is their own intellectual property, and students cannot use it without crediting that work to its original owner. They can do this through citing and referencing (discussed below). If they do not do this, the consequences can be severe, including failure or even expulsion.
The key is to pay very close attention to instructions and when in doubt ASK YOUR INSTRUCTOR as to what is acceptable or not. And remember the basic principle: unless your instructor tells you otherwise, all the work you hand in should be your own!

**Academic Dishonesty**

The opposite of integrity is dishonesty. As mentioned earlier, some behaviours are clearly dishonest (e.g., stealing an exam) while others are less clearly so (e.g., not doing your assigned share of a group project but claiming your mark with the others). It is critical for you to be aware of what is considered to be dishonest because the consequences of academic dishonesty can be severe, including failure and expulsion. To get a further idea of what is considered academic dishonesty do the web study below.

**Web Study 1: Exploring Academic Honesty/Dishonesty**

- Go to the students’ section of the McMaster University *Academic Integrity* (2006) website: [http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html)
- Do the quiz on Academic Integrity
- Read the section “What is Academic Dishonesty?”
  - What is on the list that surprises you? Why?
  - What do you think should be included?

**The causes of academic dishonesty**

As mentioned above, Academic Dishonesty can result from not understanding the rules of academic culture or of a particular assignment. However, it can also be the result of a number of other factors such as

- a gap between the expectations of the course and a student’s knowledge or abilities (including language skills)
- time pressure because of workload or personal issues
- a real desire to help out other students who are struggling
- not knowing the principles of citing and referencing

**How to avoid situations of academic dishonesty**

- Learn the rules (which we are starting here)
- Ask questions to clarify confusion or uncertainty (ideally ask your instructors)
- Learn to manage your time wisely. Don’t leave assignments and studying to the last minute.
- Ask for help when you are in trouble (from your instructors, advisors, librarians college counsellors and other support people such as peer tutors)
- Avoid plagiarism by learning how to properly cite and reference your assignments
Plagiarism
One of the most frequent forms of dishonesty is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of someone else’s work or ideas as your own. In other words, you take other people’s words, ideas, or graphics and present them as your own. In its most extreme form it could be handing in a paper written by someone else as your own, but it could also be including other people’s ideas in your own work without saying who/where those ideas came from, even though you put those ideas in your own words. Often plagiarism is unintentional—it occurs simply because students do not how to properly document research or how to cite and reference.

How to Avoid Plagiarism
a) Understand the basic rules of when to reference

Citing and referencing is essentially telling your readers or listeners where the information/ideas you are presenting come from. As stated in the York University Academic Integrity Tutorial,

There are two basic rules:

1. If you directly use someone else’s words, etc., use quotation marks and give a complete reference.
2. Give a complete reference if you use someone else’s:
   ◦ Idea, theory or opinion
   ◦ Music, drawings, designs, dance, photography and other artistic or technical work
   ◦ Tables, graphs or any other graphic element
   ◦ Facts and information that are not generally known
   ◦ Unusual or distinctive phrases, specialized terms, computer codes, quantitative data
   ◦ Spoken or written words (p. 9)

b) Learn how to effectively include information from other sources in your work:

There are two ways to include information from another source into your work: direct quotations or paraphrasing/summarizing. The York University Academic Integrity Tutorial distinguishes the two methods as follows:

Direct Quotation: When incorporating another person’s exact words into your work use a direct quotation. Be sure to place an opening quotation (”) when beginning the quote and a closing quotation (”) when ending the quote.

Paraphrasing or Summarizing: A paraphrase or summary uses your own words and sentence structure to explain someone else’s idea or information obtained from another source (see example). You do not need to use quotation
marks, however, you must acknowledge the originating source in your work with a citation. Failing to acknowledge a paraphrase implies that the writing represents your own original idea. (p. 9)

Web Study 2—The Use of Quotation and Paraphrasing
For an overview of the use of and differences between quotation, paraphrasing and referencing work your way through the following exercises from the Using Research section of the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University. Be sure to do them in the order they are listed.

- [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/)
- [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/02/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/02/)
- [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/03/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/03/)

For extensive practice in paraphrasing do the following exercises from the same source.

- [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/01/)
- [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/02/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/02/)
- [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/03/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/03/)

For a description of the proper way to introduce and use quotations, read the following document from Jerry Plotnick of University College at the University of Toronto

- [http://www.uc.utoronto.ca/quotations](http://www.uc.utoronto.ca/quotations)

c) Learn how to properly cite and reference
- Be sure you know exactly what style of citation and reference your instructor requires. There are three common styles: APA, MLA, and Chicago. Find out which one you have to use.
- Learn how to use the style sheet and the referencing conventions of the style you are supposed to use.
  - A great starting point is the tutorials in the Research and Citation Resources section at the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University ([http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/))
  - Another great resource is the Citing Sources section of NIC Library Website, which you can connect with through either the NIC Website or through MyNIC. There are a number of links to the main style sheets and to tutorials like the ones at OWL. There is also a tool that will automatically create references for items located through the library databases. The link is below:

- [http://library.nic.bc.ca/research/citing_sources/](http://library.nic.bc.ca/research/citing_sources/)
d) Ask for help

- Ask the NIC librarians. The librarians are experts in research and documentation. Not only can they answer questions you may have about citing and referencing, but they can show you the tools and resources the library has on its website.
- Ask your instructor

Web Study 3—Plagiarism
To explore the concepts of plagiarism, do the following Web Study.

- Go to the students’ section of the McMaster University Academic Integrity Website (http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html)
- Read the section on Plagiarism
- For Case studies and examples work through the following
  - The “Plagiarism Quiz” on the McMaster University Academic Integrity site under the Tutorials and Quizzes section. (The quiz is actually from the University of Illinois Bloomington. The link is https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/practice.html)
  - The “Case Studies” section of the York University Academic Integrity Tutorial (http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity/caseintro.html)

NOTE: Both the McMaster and York University sites are great resources for a variety of materials and activities that will help you better understand the notions of academic integrity, academic dishonesty, plagiarism and citing/referencing.

Conclusion
Studying in a new country can be a challenging and bewildering experience. There is so much to learn, both inside and outside the classroom. However, you do not have to face this alone. We at NIC will do our best to support you and help your educational experience here to be a rich and successful one. Just be sure to make use of the resources available to you (including the activities/sources given in this manual) and ask for help when you need it.

If you would like to challenge your understanding of academic integrity, the appendix of this guide contains a number of scenarios that could or could not be appropriate student behaviour. Try them out and then check the answer key. Some of them are not as obvious as they might seem.
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APPENDIX 1—Academic Integrity Challenge

Read the following scenarios and answer the questions about them. When you are finished check your answers with those given in the next section.

I. Scenarios

Scenario A

A student takes an exam in the morning. Some of his/her friends are in other section of the same course. After the exam, the student texts the questions to those friends.

Is this appropriate?

Should anyone be punished? Who and how?

Scenario B

A group of students form a study group. When their instructor gives them a major assignment/take-home exam, they work on it together, but each student writes his/her own paper and hands it in.

Is this appropriate?

If the teacher/administration finds out what happened, should anyone be punished? Who and how?

Scenario C

A group of students is assigned a group project. One member of the group member’s sole role is to host the meetings and keep everyone fed. The other three do all the research and writing of the project.

Is this appropriate?

If the teacher/administration finds out what happened, should anyone be punished? Who and how?
Scenario D

A group of students is assigned a group presentation. On the day of the presentation, one of the group does not feel prepared so she/he claims to be ill. The other three do the presentation without her/him.

Is this appropriate?

If the teacher/administration finds out what happened, should anyone be punished? Who and how?

Scenario E

A student is assigned an essay. As she is writing the essay she finds a paragraph in an online article that perfectly says what she wants to say, so she copies the paragraph and pastes it into her essay.

Is this appropriate?

Should she be punished? If so, how?

Scenario F

A student is assigned an essay. After writing the essay, he asks someone who speaks better English to help him edit the essay. That person rewrites sentences and even paragraphs of the essay.

Is this appropriate?

Should he be punished? If so, how?

Scenario G

A student is assigned an essay. While writing the essay, she takes the information she finds in articles and includes them in the essay using her own words.

Is this appropriate?

Should she be punished? If so, how?
II. Suggested Answers to Academic Integrity Scenarios

Below are some suggested answers to the questions posed in the scenarios above. Some of situations are clear cases of academic dishonesty. Others are not self-evident. Remember, when in doubt, ask your instructor.

Scenario A:
Although many students would consider this behaviour just helping out their friends, it is **inappropriate** and would be considered cheating by most instructors. If those involved where caught, punishment could be severe.

Scenario B:
This situation is very dependent on the nature of the assignment. The basic assumption of most instructors is that students will do their own work (individually) unless specifically instructed to work collaboratively. This is even more so in the case of take-home exams, which are intended to measure individual students understanding of the course content. If those involved where caught, they could be punished.

Scenario C:
Most instructors would **not** consider this **appropriate**. When instructors give a group assignment like this, they expect all the students in a group to participate in the design, researching and creation of the final product. If found out the student who just facilitated the comfort of his fellow group members (by providing the place and food) might be given a failing grade. This would most likely not occur to the others involved, although their grades might also be compromised.

Scenario D:
This is definitely **not appropriate**. First of all, the student has let down the other members of the group, who have every right to be furious with him/her because it could affect their marks. In such a situation, there is a chance that one of them might complain to the instructor. The consequences for the offending student if this occurs could be at least a very much reduced mark and possibly more.

Scenario E:
It depends how the student includes the copied material in the essay. It is **plagiarism** to copy a passage from someone else’s work without appropriately marking it as a quotation and citing/referencing it. Plagiarism is never appropriate and the consequences could be a failing grade on the assignment of course, or even expulsion from the college/university. However, if it is presented as a quotation (most like a block quotation for something of paragraph length) and appropriately cited/referenced, this is appropriate use.
Scenario F:
This is **not appropriate**. While it is OK for students to ask for someone to proof-read their essays, such major editing help becomes a form of plagiarism. Instructor reactions will vary, partly depending on the extent of the rewrites. Remember that it is very easy for an instructor to identify when the phrases and sentences students are using are not their own, which is what occurs when students receive excessive help with language and grammar.

Scenario G:
This situation is similar to Scenario E above. It depends how the student includes the paraphrased material in the essay. It is **plagiarism** to insert a paraphrase of someone else’s words or ideas without appropriately citing/referencing it. While this inappropriate paraphrasing may not be as negatively viewed as directly copying someone’s work, plagiarism is never condoned and the consequences could be a failing grade on the assignment of course, or even expulsion from the college/university. However, if the paraphrase is appropriately cited/referenced, this is appropriate use and is expected by instructors.