

Policy for Academic Honesty

SOS Hermann Gmeiner International College

1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Academic honesty is a key component of integrity in teaching and learning at the SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College. It is the foundation upon which students and teachers maintain rigorous standards of personal and collective behaviour in an academic environment, and the College can function and accomplish its mission only when such expectations are acknowledged and met by all stakeholders. This policy is designed to facilitate understanding and ensure adherence to expected behaviours by, firstly, providing clear guidelines as to how to make judgements and engage in actions which promote the highest standards of academic honesty and, secondly, defining consequences, penalties and remedial steps which will be applied in instances of academic malpractice.

An integral part of the mission of the College is to help develop:

- “students [who are] confident adults capable of facing the challenges of a fast-changing world, by inculcating in them critical and analytical abilities”, and
- “life-long learners who are fully prepared for the best universities worldwide” (“Mission Statement, Philosophy and Objectives”)

These objectives are consistent with the attributes of the IB learner profile which encourage an inquiring, knowledgeable, thinkers and principled approach to learning. In order to achieve them, students must understand and apply a generally accepted code of conduct with regard to intellectual material. This is necessary for:

- Moral reasons – where the work of others is respected, as are the intentions behind assessment tasks and their integrity, and
 - Practical reasons – to do with the need to use and build upon the work of others in the processes of teaching, learning and creating knowledge
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2. RESPONSIBILITIES

All students:

1. are expected to be familiar with and understand the academic honesty policy, the SOS-HGIC referencing guide and the SOS-HGIC assessment policy
2. are obliged to make the best possible use of all opportunities the College offers in support of academic honesty
3. must accept full responsibility for the academic honesty of their own work
4. should actively seek guidance and help from teachers and the librarian as and when it is needed

All teachers:

1. are expected to be familiar with and understand the academic honesty policy, the SOS-HGIC referencing guide and the SOS-HGIC assessment policy
2. must consistently apply this policy
3. must ensure within the scope of their professional roles that students adhere to this policy
4. should use all available opportunities within their subject teaching to facilitate the application of this policy
5. must report instances of academic dishonesty to the Director of Studies

The Director of Studies:

1. ensures that the curriculum includes opportunities for applying and practising academic honesty
2. ensures that both students and parents/guardians have opportunities to gain an awareness and a clear understanding of the content of the policy on academic honesty
3. deals with cases of academic dishonesty

The librarian:

1. provides/facilitates acquisition of and access to adequate resources for students and teachers, including referencing handbooks
2. offers assistance and guides students in applying the SOS-HGIC referencing guide, thereby supplementing curricular offerings

Parents:

1. are expected to appreciate the importance of academic honesty and support their child in meeting the expectations of this policy
 2. are expected to support the College, within their possibilities, in the application of this policy
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3. BEST PRACTICE

The SOS-HGIC academic honesty policy is based on IGCSE and IB Diploma Programme goals and outlines expectations for students and teachers. While the IGCSE programme broadly aims to support learners in becoming:

- a) confident in working with information and ideas – their own and those of others,
- b) responsible,
- c) reflective as learners, and
- d) engaged intellectually (“The Cambridge Learner and Teacher Attributes”)

The IB Learner Profile specifically defines that all members of the IB community strive:

- a) to be principled, and
- b) to act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice. (“The IB Learner Profile”)

Academic honesty helps to ensure that all members of the school community maintain integrity, complete the work that is involved in learning instead of evading that work through academic misconduct and have equal opportunities to accomplish academic work in learning, teaching and assessment.

For this purpose, all members of the SOS-HGIC community will always:

1. provide proper, clear and explicit acknowledgment of the ideas, words or work of another person which have been quoted, paraphrased or summarised, including from print or non-print sources such as:
 - a. Visual
 - b. Audio
 - c. Graphic
 - d. Lectures
 - e. Interviews
 - f. Broadcasts
 - g. Maps
 - h. Books
 - i. Journals
 - j. Newspapers

(this point is concerned with the avoidance of **plagiarism**),

2. be familiar with and consistently apply the SOS-HGIC citation guidelines (this point is concerned with the avoidance of **plagiarism**),
3. refrain from submitting the same piece of work for different assessments (avoiding **duplication**),
4. refrain from engaging in inappropriate collaboration between students (avoiding **collusion**),
5. ensure the authenticity of all information or data collected for assignments (avoiding **fabrication**),
6. adhere to examination regulations before, during and after examinations (following **examination regulations**),
7. strive to produce original, authentic pieces of work

4. VIOLATIONS – TYPES and EXEMPLARS

1. **Plagiarism**: the representation of the ideas or work of another person as the candidate's own.
2. **Duplication**: the presentation of the same work for different assessed tasks.
3. **Collusion**: the support of malpractice of another candidate by allowing one's work to be copied or submitted for assessment by another.
4. **Fabrication**: the use of inauthentic data, evidence, facts, quotes and other sources of information.
5. **Impersonation**: false representation of authorship.
6. **Examination malpractice**: the taking of unauthorised material into an examination room, or misconduct during an examination.

The following scenarios are illustrations of the school's academic policy either being violated or on the brink of being violated. Students and teachers should be aware of what can go wrong and devise strategies to avoid academic malpractice.

Situation A - Fabrication

Johnnie has procrastinated in connection with his Geography extended essay to the extent that he has not got around to collecting any primary data. The deadline for the EE draft to be submitted to his supervisor is next week and he does not have time to leave school in order to get this data. He knows what kind of data he wants in order to advance the arguments in his essay, and he is sorely tempted to fabricate it in order to get around his problem.

- **Danger:** *Poor time management could lead Johnnie to being tempted to fabricate data. This would make his assignment invalid.*
- **How to avoid:** *Collect data as early as possible, consult with supervisor about timings and unforeseen demands*

Situation B - Collusion

Ama is doing well in Physics. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of her friend Esther, who has struggled with the maths content of the course throughout. Ama lends Esther her assignment response with the good intention of helping her to understand how to solve the problems set, but Esther is unable to express herself in her own response in a way that distinguishes the work from that of Ama. Both submissions are almost identical.

- **Danger:** *non-coincident similarities will inevitably occur. This is an offence that affects both students who are guilty of collusion.*
- **How to avoid:** *structure assistance for peers differently, don't freely distribute electronic copies of work, warn friend of potential consequences of copying*

Situation C – Duplication

Jacob did his Chemistry individual scientific investigation on the structure and properties of carbon allotropes. The work was conducted very well and the teacher praised his effort. When it was time to choose his extended essay subject, Jacob realized that with some changes his chemistry investigation could easily be turned into an extended essay. He decided that is exactly what he is going to do to save time and energy.

- **Danger:** *Getting credit twice for the same work, for two different assessments, is cheating even if the work is still yours.*
- **How to avoid:** *if you liked the topic, discuss the issue honestly with your supervisor to make the work sufficiently different from the previous one and put in the required effort.*

Situation D – Examination malpractice

Charlie is busy in the Mathematics examination writing answers to all the questions on the paper. Then he discovers there is one for which he needs to make a measurement on the page, and he

suddenly becomes aware that he has left his instruments elsewhere. He asks the exam invigilator to ask Stevie, who is sitting in front of him, if he can borrow his ruler.

- **Danger:** *Invigilators and students often see such practices as ‘nothing wrong’, but sharing, or the facilitation of sharing, is breach of exam regulations.*
- **How to avoid:** *remember your tools. If you forgot do your best without them because it inconveniences other students. Be familiar with IGCSE and IB exam regulations.*

Situation E – Breach of time zone regulation

Annie has just finished her final IB History examination. She is confident that she has done very well and is elated. In fact, she is so elated that she takes to social media in order to tell her friends how she answered particular questions on the paper.

- **Danger:** *breach of time zone regulations on exam content discussion. It is also ethically wrong to help others by giving them undue advantage over others.*
- **How to avoid:** *too late, if traced this will be an offence dealt with by the examining body.*

Situation F – Plagiarism

Henry needs some expert opinion to contrast with his own interpretation of a text extract in his Literature course. So he visits some appropriate websites. Happy to have found what he wanted, he extracts a couple of sentences that make the most important point, and is careful to include an in-text citation and an entry in his Works Cited list at the end of his essay.

- **Danger:** *The absence of quotation marks will count as plagiarism because it is assumed that the student is claiming that those are his own words, while they are not. Sometimes students do this deliberately to hide lengthy or too many quotes.*
- **How to avoid:** *always use quotation marks when the words belong to others. If troubled by the number of quotation marks, that is a sign that there is too much of other people’s work in the assignment*

Situation G – Too much help/ unwise use of Internet sources

Kwame can’t decide which TOK essay title to choose. Before attempting to interpret or answer any of them, he Googles the titles and finds a website with some quite substantial ideas for how to answer each of them. He makes a decision and works on including these ideas into his essay.

- **Danger:** *student’s thinking is contaminated from the start, before it had a chance to blossom, and the student might end up writing the essay not the way he/she understood the question, but the way other people understood it. It is also dangerous to use material that one does not understand too well. Usually students refrain from acknowledging help sites on the Internet for obvious reasons and run the risk of plagiarism.*
- **How to avoid:** *don’t start assignments with other people’s opinions. You can better evaluate the opinion of others when you have your own thoughts about the question.*

Situation H – Impersonation

Nicholas finds mathematics a difficult subject. But his very good friend Kweku is a top mathematics student. Whenever homework is given Nicholas asks Kweku for help and most often, Kweku ends up doing Nicholas’s homework for him. The teacher notices a huge disparity between Nicholas’s homework and exam performance and starts to investigate.

- **Danger:** *teachers know their students’ ability. Both students have committed academic dishonesty.*
- **How to avoid:** *seek help to understand, not answers to questions.*

Situation I – breach of limits of teacher assistance

Mr. Jones is being followed around the school by his students on written assignment deadline day. This is because students know that, despite complaints, he never says no to students who ask him to help them their work, no matter when and no matter how much needs to be done. Mr. Jones ends up in a dark corner of a classroom with a red pen, editing work in a manner that the examination authority does not permit.

- **Danger:** *students procrastinate and do not take their drafts seriously because that have got used to the idea that someone else will always be there to “make things better”. When the teacher goes beyond the degree of assistance that is spelled out for the assignment, and then authenticates the work as belonging to the student, he has committed a dishonest act.*
- **How to avoid:** *teachers must provide assistance within the limits allowed by the examining authority and make it clear to students what those limits are.*

5. CONSEQUENCES, PENALTIES, REMEDIAL STEPS

Various breaches of this policy are shown below. In each case, stipulations are made concerning what happens to the work associated with the offence (**consequences**), what happens to the student (**penalties**) and what, if anything, can be done to offset or redress the situation (**remedial steps**).

SCENARIO	CONSEQUENCES	PENALTIES	REMEDIAL STEPS
1. Internally assessed work, not used for final (IB or IGCSE) assessment			
Collusion	Scores of zero/lowest grade for both students	1 st offence: dealt with at the discretion of the teacher 2 nd offence: student signs bond, mentioned in semester report 3 rd offence: letter to parent/guardian including broken bond, mentioned in semester report	none
Plagiarism	Score of zero/lowest grade		none
Duplication	Score of zero/lowest grade for second assignment which is later averaged with re-submitted work		Re-submission of second assignment
Fabrication	Score of zero/lowest grade		none
Impersonation	Score of zero/lowest grade (for both students if work was made available intentionally)		none

2. Externally assessed/externally moderated work (final IBDP work, IGCSE coursework)			
SCENARIO	CONSEQUENCES	PENALTIES	REMEDIAL STEPS
a) If not identified by College ahead of submission: possible loss of component grade and IB Diploma or IGCSE certificate			
b) If identified by College too late to take remedial steps: notification of examining body, loss of component grade and IB Diploma or IGCSE certificate			
c) If identified by College early enough to take remedial steps: see below			
Collusion	Score of zero for both students if assessment is used for semester grade	Letter to parent/ guardians, mentioned in semester report	Re-submission of assignment under supervised conditions but no additional support from teacher
Plagiarism	Score of zero if assessment is used for semester grade		
Duplication	Score of zero for second assignment if assessment is used for semester grade		
Impersonation	Score of zero/lowest grade if assessment is used for semester grade (for both students if work was made available intentionally)		
Fabrication	Score of zero/lowest grade if assessment is used for semester grade		
3. Examination malpractice			
SCENARIO	CONSEQUENCES	PENALTIES	REMEDIAL STEPS
Class test	Score of zero/lowest grade	Letter to parent/ guardian, mentioned in semester report	none
Internal exam	Score of zero/lowest grade	Suspension*, mentioning in semester report	none
External exam	Report to Examining Board	Suspension* from school, mentioning in semester report	none
4. Teacher breaching bounds of student assistance			
SCENARIO	CONSEQUENCES	PENALTIES	REMEDIAL STEPS
Teacher systematically offers more assistance to students than is permitted by IB/IGCSE regulations		If teacher, issued with official warning by HOD If HOD, issued with official warning by DOS	

*the interpretation of “suspension” is, on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the Director of Studies and Senior Management Team, and may range from a short internal suspension from classes to outright expulsion, depending on circumstances.

All communication to parents on breaches of the academic honesty policy will be from the Principal’s Office, on advice from the Director of Studies and the Senior Management Team. Repeat offenders may be suspended from the College at the discretion of the Principal and Senior Management Team even when the above regulations do not stipulate an automatic suspension.

In cases where students are required to re-submit an assignment the College may prescribe at what times the student will be required to work on the assignment. This may result in the loss of exeat or limit the student on other ways.

6. FORMAL PROCEDURES

1. With the exception of first offences under scenario 1 above, all cases of academic misconduct must be reported directly in writing to the Director of Studies **and** the appropriate Head of Department. Evidence must be supplied in the form of documents or a report from the teacher concerned.
 2. The Director of Studies will evaluate each individual case in consultation with the teacher and Head of Department and come to a conclusion.
 3. A meeting will be called in which the student is presented with the evidence and invited to comment on the case. These comments may be taken into account in fine-tuning the decision. Decisions will be communicated and explained to the Principal.
 4. The Director of Studies will make the case known to the entire teaching faculty so that any subsequent cases are viewed in the light of the previous one(s).
 5. Records of breaches of this policy will be kept on the student's record file by the Director of Studies.
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This policy will be reviewed every two years.

SOS-HGIC, November 2016

Sources

"Mission Statement, Philosophy and Objectives". *SOS Hermann Gmeiner International College*. 2015. 7 April 2016. <<http://www.soshgic.edu.gh/index.php/about/mission-philosophy>>

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