

CSCI-1200 Data Structures — Fall 2014

Collaboration Policy & Academic Integrity

iClicker Lecture exercises

Responses to iClicker lecture exercises will be used to earn incentives for the Data Structures course. Discussion of the “collaborative” iClicker lecture exercises with those seated around you is encouraged. However, if we find anyone using an iClicker that is registered to another individual, using more than one iClicker, or copying answers or providing answers for “individual” iClicker lecture exercises, we will confiscate all iClickers involved and report the incident to the Dean of Students.

Academic Integrity for Exams

All exams for this course will be completed individually. Copying, communicating, or using disallowed materials during an exam is cheating, of course. Students caught cheating on an exam will receive an F in the course and will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Collaboration Policy for Programming Labs

Collaboration is encouraged during the weekly programming labs. Students are allowed to talk through and assist each other with these programming exercises. Students may ask for help from each other, the graduate lab TA, and undergraduate programming mentors. But each student must write up and debug their own lab solutions on their own laptop and be prepared to present and discuss this work with the TA to receive credit for each checkpoint.

As a general guideline, students may look over each other’s shoulders at their labmate’s laptop screen during lab — this is the best way to learn about IDEs, code development strategies, testing, and debugging. However, looking should not lead to line-by-line copying. Furthermore, each student should retain “control” of their own keyboard. While being assisted by a classmate or a TA, the student should remain fully engaged on problem solving and ask plenty of questions. Finally, other than the specific files provided by the instructor, electronic files or file excerpts should not be shared or copied (by email, text, Dropbox, or any other means).

Homework Collaboration Policy

Academic integrity is a complicated issue for individual programming assignments, but one we take very seriously. Students naturally want to work together, and it is clear they learn a great deal by doing so. Getting help is often the best way to interpret error messages and find bugs, even for experienced programmers. Furthermore, in-depth discussions about problem solving, algorithms, and code efficiency are invaluable and make us all better software engineers. In response to this, the following rules will be enforced for programming assignments:

- Students may read through the homework assignment together and discuss what is asked by the assignment, examples of program input & expected output, the overall approach to tackling the assignment, possible high level algorithms to solve the problem, and recent concepts from lecture that might be helpful in the implementation.
- Students are not allowed to work together in writing code or pseudocode. Detailed algorithms and implementation must be done individually. Students may not discuss homework code or pseudocode in detail (line-by-line or loop-by-loop) while it is being written or afterwards. In general, students should not look at each other’s computer screen (or hand-written or printed assignment design notes) while working on homework. As a guideline, if an algorithm is too complex to describe orally (without dictating line-by-line), then sharing that algorithm is disallowed by the homework collaboration policy.
- Students are allowed to ask each other for help in interpreting error messages and in discussing strategies for testing and finding bugs. First, ask for help orally, by describing the symptoms of the problem. For each homework, many students will run into similar problems and after hearing a general description of a problem, another student might have suggestions for what to try to further diagnose or fix the issue. If that doesn’t work, and if the compiler error message or flawed output is particularly lengthy, it is okay to ask another student to briefly look at the computer screen to see the details of the error message and the corresponding line of code. Please see a TA during office hours if a more in-depth examination of the code is necessary.

- Students may not share or copy code or pseudocode. Homework files or file excerpts should never be shared electronically (by email, text, LMS, Dropbox, etc.). Homework solution files from previous years (either instructor or student solutions) should not be used in any way. Students must not leave their code (either electronic or printed) in publicly-accessible areas. Students may not share computers in any way when there is an assignment pending. Each student is responsible for securing their homework materials using all reasonable precautions. These precautions include: Students should password lock the screen when they step away from their computer. Homework files should only be stored on private accounts/computers with strong passwords. Homework printouts should be stored in a locked drawer/room.
- Students may not show their code or pseudocode to other students as a means of helping them. Well-meaning homework help or tutoring can turn into a violation of the homework collaboration policy when stressed with time constraints from other courses and responsibilities. Sometimes good students who feel sorry for struggling students are tempted to provide them with “just a peek” at their code. Such “peeks” often turn into extensive copying, despite prior claims of good intentions.
- Students may not receive detailed help on their assignment code or pseudocode from individuals outside the course. This restriction includes tutors, students from prior terms, friends and family members, internet resources, etc.
- All collaborators (classmates, TAs, ALAC tutors, upperclassmen, students/instructor via LMS, etc.), and all of the resources (books, online reference material, etc.) consulted in completing this assignment must be listed in the README.txt file submitted with the assignment.

These rules are in place for each homework assignment and extends two days after the submission deadline.

Homework Plagiarism Detection and Academic Dishonesty Penalty

We use an automatic code comparison tool to help spot homework assignments that have been submitted in violation of these rules. The tool takes all assignments from all sections and all prior terms and compares them, highlighting regions of the code that are similar. Code submitted by students who followed the rules produces less than 10% overlap. Code submitted by students who broke the rules may produce anywhere from about 30% to 100% overlap.

The instructor checks flagged pairs of assignments very carefully, to determine which students may have violated the rules of collaboration and academic integrity on programming assignments. When it is believed that an incident of academic dishonesty has occurred, the involved students are contacted and a meeting is scheduled. All students caught cheating on a programming assignment (both the copier and the provider) will be punished. **The standard punishment for the first offense is a 0 on the assignment and a letter grade reduction on the final semester grade.** Students whose violations are more flagrant will receive a higher penalty. For example, a student who outright steals another student’s code will receive an F in the course immediately. Students caught a second time will receive an immediate F, regardless of circumstances. Each incident will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Academic Dishonesty in the Student Handbook

Refer to the *The Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities* for further discussion of academic dishonesty. Note that: “Students found in violation of the academic dishonesty policy are prohibited from dropping the course in order to avoid the academic penalty.”

Number of Students Found in Violation of the Policy

Historically, 5-10% of students are found to be in violation of the academic dishonesty policy each semester. Many of these students immediately admit to falling behind with the coursework and violating one or more of the rules above – if it is a minor first-time offense they may receive a reduced penalty.

Read this document in its entirety. If you have any questions, contact the instructor or the TAs immediately. Sign this form and give it to your TA during your first lab section.

Name:

Section #:

Signature:

Date: