

## GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER - Office Memorandum

**DATE:** November 2018  
**TO:** All Georgetown Law Students  
**FROM:** Professor Steven Goldblatt, Chair, Professional Responsibility Committee  
Professor Michael S. Frisch, Ethics Counsel  
**RE:** Examinations, Papers, and the Student Disciplinary Code

As the end of the academic term approaches, we want to highlight for you the types of Student Disciplinary Code violations that are of special importance at this time. You are being trained to become lawyers and adherence to rules of conduct is essential in our profession and as a law student.

Several rules and sanctions are addressed below:

1. **SANCTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH TAKE-HOME AND IN-CLASS EXAMINATIONS.** For in-class examinations, any attempt to continue work on the exam after time has elapsed exposes the student to disciplinary charges. Late-return of take-home examinations are covered either by the Code or by the General Administrative Policies which also cover late arrivals and missed examinations, as well as the submission of the wrong document (paper or examination) for grading or breach of a variety of rules that relate to examinations and papers.

All students should exercise great care to ensure that these rules are followed. Students should review Section 402 of the Code, page 105 of the Student Handbook, as well as the General Administrative Policies (EXAM AND PAPER ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES), Student Handbook at 85-90. Together, these provisions describe Law Center policies related to examinations and papers. The penalties that apply when these rules are violated may be significant, including disciplinary action. Even if disciplinary action is not indicated, the student may receive an AF grade for the course, which is factored into the GPA as an earned F. Students should also be familiar with the AP grade which may also apply.

2. **PLAGIARISM IN PAPERS AND EXAMINATIONS.** Plagiarism is the use of the words or ideas of another as one's own and without proper attribution to the source. Although plagiarism normally is associated with the unattributed use of published work of another, it has broader meaning in the law school setting where students are being graded on the quality of their thoughts as expressed in examinations, papers, and articles. Consequently, any use of written material without proper attribution to the source of the words or ideas on an examination or paper violates the Code. The plagiarism provision in the Student Disciplinary Code was recently revised and provides links to helpful information about plagiarism (Section 101(a), pp. 101-102 of the Student Handbook). Again, a reminder that you are responsible for knowing the rules stated in the Code and a responsible law student, like a responsible lawyer, must fully understand the rules that govern their behavior.

Students should take great care to distinguish their own words from text taken from other sources. The term "sources" includes, but is not limited to books, articles, papers, speeches, and all other primary and secondary material, whether published in traditional hard-copy sources or on the Internet or in other computer-accessed sources. A student's sloppy note-taking – in which the student mistakenly copies someone else's words or ideas into the student's work product without attribution -- is not a defense to a charge of plagiarism.

It also bears repeating that plagiarism rules apply to examinations as well as papers and articles. Thus, cutting and pasting someone else's words into examinations without attribution is plagiarism. Cutting and pasting also violates examination rules that prohibit cutting and pasting regardless of the source. Thus, cutting and pasting one's own words into an exam is not plagiarism but it is a disciplinary infraction because it violates general examination instructions.

3. COLLABORATION ON TAKE-HOME EXAMINATIONS IS PROHIBITED.

Students are expected to strictly follow the rules for take-home examinations and discussing the exam with anyone while the exam is being taken is no more appropriate in a take-home exam than it would be in a monitored exam. Unless specifically permitted by the professor, students may not discuss an examination with anyone prior to submitting the completed examination to the Office of the Registrar. Students should be aware that any discussion—with other students, faculty, or anyone else—about the examination, no matter how casual, may be considered a violation of the Code. For instance, any online discussion of an examination is prohibited. Students are not permitted to share examination questions or their work product with others. Collaboration is a serious ethical violation that compromises the integrity of our examination processes. The Law Center carefully investigates whenever there is a suggestion that there may have been collaboration on take home examination answers. In aid of such investigations, advanced software programs are used to compare examinations for substantially similar answers suggesting collaboration.

4. ANONYMITY IN EXAMINATIONS. Do not reveal to your professor any information in the exam answers that would in any manner identify you as the author of your examination. To protect your anonymity and remain in compliance with the Student Disciplinary Code, students may not indicate to the professor that an exam has been deferred, discuss any modification of the timing of an individual exam with the professor, or otherwise identify themselves in any way to the professor as the author of the examination until after grades are published. Students may not discuss the substance of the examination with the professor or with any other student from the time the exam is first administered until after grades are published. Student Handbook at 89.

5. OTHER EXAMINATION RULES Examinations are subject to general rules as well as individual professor instructions regarding use of materials and electronic access. It is the responsibility of each student to be aware of and comply with all rules that apply to an examination and failure to do so may subject a student to disciplinary sanctions.

6. POST-EXAMINATION COMMUNICATIONS. If you have an issue relating to an exam or exam instructions, you have one place to go to and that is the Office of the Registrar. DO NOT CONTACT THE PROFESSOR. Sending an anonymous email or note to a professor that relates to the examination violates this rule. Any questions about the examination must be directed to the Office of the Registrar, not the professor or anyone else.

7. DISCUSSING EXAMINATIONS WITH FELLOW STUDENTS. Because examinations are not all administered at the same time, you may not discuss the examination with other students until grades are posted.

8. IN-CLASS EXAMINATIONS. Listen to and follow the instructions on the examination video. Cell phones, smart watches, or similar electronic devices must be turned off and left in the aisle. Any questions about in-class rules must be addressed with the proctors before the examination begins.

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The purpose of this memorandum is to alert all students to be careful to comply with these rules. Students should be sure that they understand the concept of plagiarism and the terms of all examination and paper rules. In this regard our goal is to educate and we hope that these rules are never violated. We also strive to protect the 99++ percent of our students who comply with the rules and to ensure that those few who disregard them do not gain an unfair advantage.