Prologue: I take academic integrity very seriously: it is a core value for a teacher and researcher (and should be for a student). Therefore, I want to state unequivocally what behavior I expect from everyone in this course. Although I do not want to brow-beat you on this topic, I have learned that it is best to deal with this issue early and clearly, before any questionable incidents occur. So, as a preventative measure, I am asking everyone to read, sign/date, and return this document. A blank copy is available on the Handouts link on the course web page for your future reference. I will not record your grades until you sign, date, and return this document to me. We will discuss it in class beforehand.

Summary: You should do your own work as instructed, not using or sharing unauthorized materials, or any materials not available to all your classmates, especially those that would afford you an unfair advantage in earning a grade (e.g., materials collected from previous quarters or other students). I expect students who are retaking ICS-46 to redo all their assignments, without examining/referencing any materials that they collected when they took this course previously; discard these materials. Finally, no one should examine/download/use any parts of solutions to similar problems posted on web repositories, even if it is just to help them to conceptualize/write/debug their own code.

Bottom line: It is better to get a lower grade on an assignment than cheat, get a 0, and have it sent to the Academic Integrity and Student Conduct Office. No one is entitled to a grade; you must earn every one. Start assignments early.

Take Home Quizzes: Students are expected to do all their own work. All course materials, books, the world-wide web, etc. are acceptable resources for helping you find answers to these questions and you may spend as much time on these quizzes as you want. But, students may not search for/examine answers/exact solutions posted on homework/code repository websites, for the specific problems asked, if they are available from previous versions of this or other courses (and students should not post on such websites nor distribute any problems or their solutions on the web). Students may not discuss or exchange the material on these quizzes: they may not collaborate with each other, nor receive written or oral help from anyone (except the instructor), whether it be in person, by phone, e-mail, texting, etc.

Programming Assignments: Some programming assignments allow (and others disallow) students to work in pairs, submitting one copy of their joint work. Obviously when working in pairs, designing, synthesizing, documenting, analyzing, and debugging code while discussing it with your partner is an integral part of the assignment; all are important skills that we expect you to acquire. In addition, you are welcome to discuss high-level ideas about a programming assignment with anyone else. It is fine to discuss its specification and approaches to designing/solving the problem, to draw pictures or object diagrams, etc. In fact, you are even welcome to discuss with other students, at a high level, how to debug your code.

But the student/pair seeking help may not examine code written by any other students/pairs, and may not show their code to other students/pairs who are helping them debug it. I don’t want to limit high-level discussions about the assignment, but you absolutely cross a real boundary when you examine another student’s/pair’s code or show your code to other students/pairs for help when debugging: I expect you to wrestle with some problems on your own (or jointly, with your partner). Think of a history paper: you can discuss the material in class and with other students, but you must write your own outline, use all your own words when you write the paper, and proofread it yourself. Looking at someone else’s paper or showing someone else your paper invites plagiarism; it is the same with code.

If a “friend” asks you to show him/her your code, you are opening the door wide for a possible charge of academic misconduct, for both of you. Never email a copy of your code or provide a printed version. I have seen friendships crumble when student A innocently supplies a copy of his/her code to student B, who then plagiarizes it, getting both in trouble. Do not be an accessory to misconduct; truly help a friend by saying “no” to such a request.

The best source for help on programming assignments is the instructor or staff (TAs and Lab Tutors) in person, by e-mail, or online. We are experienced at providing the right level and kind of information and help, designed not only to solve your immediate problem, but other similar ones that may arise later in the quarter. Or, use the message forums to post appropriate questions and answer questions appropriately.

We use the program Moss (Measure of software similarity) to analyze all submitted programs. Moss does a thorough job of comparing code (in ways designed to detect cheating: so operations like changing names,
moving code around, etc. don’t fool it). This information is automatically indexed on a web page that makes it very efficient for me to examine the similarities that it detects (adding in my 40 years of experience with this issue). The programs that we choose to examine closely have similarity metrics a few standard deviations above the mean (they are very very similar). When I use assignments from previous quarters, I run moss with solutions from those quarters as well. I will demonstrate moss during one of the lectures, so you can see it in action.

In-Class (written exams): Students are expected to do all their own work, quietly in the classroom, and do it during the allotted time (stopping when directed), with the benefit of only the materials explicitly allowed during the exam. Students may not bring in any other materials, nor access such materials nor communicate with each other directly or via any technology: cell-phones, PDAs, calculators, pagers, IM, e-mail, miniature TV cameras, etc.).

Students have been caught bringing unauthorized notes into exams, copying from a neighboring student, and using a smart-device to access the web during an exam Please put all your materials (including electronics) underneath your desk before you start an exam.

Tutors: LARC tutors are trained to know how to help students learn the material without doing their homework for them. If a student hires a private tutor, the tutor may not do the student’s homework nor even help the student with his/her homework (e.g., quizzes and programming assignments). Hiring a tutor who does your work, or helps with your work, violates this Academic Integrity Contract. Tutors can only help you learn the material, not do your work.

Penalties: The penalty for violating this contract is a 0 on the entire assignment (even if cheating occurred on only part: better to leave some part blank and lose only a few points). In addition, I also send a letter to the UCI Academic Integrity and Student Conduct Office, who will contact the student and then pass this information along to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs in the student’s School (ICS). A first offense is typically treated as an educational experience, but a second offense typically results in suspension from UCI for 1-2 quarters.

A Safety Clause for Collaboration: If you collaborate with anyone, or get information from the Internet, document it (cite the source, as you would on research papers that you write) on the work that you submit, by including the name of that person/URL on the web and the nature of the collaboration. Doing so helps insulate you from any Academic Misconduct charge: I cannot charge plagiarism when a citation appears clearly on the work. But, receiving unauthorized help/using unauthorized sources can still result in a grade penalty.

General Advice: If you are unable to perform well on an assignment, contact me immediately to discuss the problem (you will be at a advantage if you do not wait until the last-minute to start your assignments: the biggest reason students commit academic misconduct is poor time-management skills); such problems can be resolved in many ways. I should be your first contact point in stressful situations. Of course you can also seek appropriate help from your TA and/or Lab Tutor. Also, if a friend comes and asks to see homework prohibited by this agreement, don’t show it to him/her. I understand the peer pressure to “help a friend”, but let me assure you that this is truly not the way to help: you are exposing your friend –and yourself– to a 0 grade, and a possible University-level penalty; a friend wouldn’t ask you to expose yourself in this way. Finally, if a student commits academic misconduct and feels guilty about it, and admits it to me before I contact the student, he/she will receive only a grade of 0 (with no letter and therefore no University-level penalty). This has happened.

Bottom Line: Faculty are here (and assignments are designed) to maximize your learning and ensure that you receive a fair grade. If you cannot trust us to perform this function faithfully, and cooperate with us to do so, you are missing something important in your education at UCI. I want to create a positive environment, where students truly help each other. But, you must know which boundaries not to cross when asking for or providing help.

Signature: Acknowledge that you have read this document and understand it; see me or post on a forum if you need any clarification. You must adhere to the letter and spirit of its content during this course, or receive the stated penalties.

Name (signed) ___________________________ Date ____________

More information about this topic is available in the Syllabus, under the topic of Academic Integrity.