

Proposed Guidelines in
Academic Honesty: Mathematical Exercises in MATH Courses

In all undergraduate mathematics courses it is essential for students to do mathematical exercises in order to gain more computing skills, to nurture more logical thinking and to develop good ability in formulating and organizing mathematical ideas. Solutions to most questions contained in such exercises are usually well known, though they may not be easily available to students. In fact most exercises do not involve any originality. It is not uncommon that two students working independently come out with exactly the same solution to a particular mathematical question. Moreover, most instructors in the Department of Mathematics do give students hints sometimes and encourage discussions among students, with the bottom line being that students are prohibited from copying from each other's solutions. In this regard, the teacher, probably with the help of the departmental disciplinary committee, is the most appropriate person to educate the students to observe the academic honesty, and to distinguish legitimate discussions from cheating and plagiarism.

Regarding the issue of the academic honesty involving mathematical exercises, the Board recommends the following:

1. The weight for any one set of mathematical exercises (such as those conducted weekly or biweekly) should not be more than 3% in the final assessment scheme of the concerned course.
2. Any suspected case of misconduct/cheating is to be handled/investigated by the teacher of the concerned course, with possible actions against any first offender such as:
 - (a) to assign zero mark for all questions in the involved set of exercises;
 - (b) to counsel the students and issue a reprimand.
3. Any second offended case will be reported (through the Departmental Disciplinary Committee) to the Faculty Disciplinary Committee for further actions.