

WORK FOR GRADE POLICY

Development of the spirit as well as the skills of academic inquiry is central to the mission of VMI's Academic Program. As a community of scholars, posing questions and seeking answers, we invariably consult and build upon the ideas, discoveries, and products of others who have wrestled with related issues and problems before us. We are obligated ethically and in many instances legally to acknowledge the sources of all borrowed material that we use in our own work. This is the case whether we find that material in conventional resources, such as the library or cyberspace, or discover it in other places like conversations with our peers.

Academic integrity requires the full and proper documentation of any material that is not original with us. It is therefore a matter of honor. To misrepresent someone else's words, ideas, images, data, or other intellectual property as one's own is stealing, lying, and cheating all at once.

Because the offense of improper or incomplete documentation is so serious, and the consequences so potentially grave, the following policies regarding work for grade have been adopted as a guide to cadets and faculty in upholding the Honor Code under which all VMI cadets live:

1) Cadets' responsibilities

"Work for grade" is defined as any work presented to an instructor for a formal grade or undertaken in satisfaction of a requirement for successful completion of a course or degree requirement. All work submitted for grade is considered the cadet's own work. **"Cadet's own work"** means that he or she has composed the work from his or her general accumulation of knowledge and skill except as clearly and fully documented and that it has been composed especially for the current assignment. No work previously submitted in any course at VMI or elsewhere will be resubmitted or reformatted for submission in a current course without the specific approval of the instructor.

In all work for grade, failure to distinguish between the cadet's own work and ideas and the work and ideas of others is known as **plagiarism**. Proper documentation clearly and fully identifies the sources of all borrowed ideas, quotations, or other assistance. The cadet is referred to the VMI-authorized handbook for rules concerning quotations, paraphrases, and documentation.

In all written work for grade, the cadet must include the words **"HELP RECEIVED"** conspicuously on the document, and he or she must then do one of two things: (1) state "none," meaning that no help was received except as documented in the work; or (2) explain in detail the nature of the help received. In oral work for grade, the cadet must make the same declaration before

beginning the presentation. Admission of help received may result in a lower grade but will not result in prosecution for an honor violation.

Cadets are prohibited from discussing the contents of a quiz/exam until it is returned to them or final course grades are posted. This enjoiner does not imply that any inadvertent expression or behavior that might indicate one's feeling about the test should be considered a breach of honor. The real issue is whether cadets received information, not available to everyone else in the class, which would give them an unfair advantage. If a cadet inadvertently gives or receives information, the incident must be reported to the professor and the Honor Court.

Each cadet bears the responsibility for familiarizing himself or herself thoroughly with the policies stated in this section, with any supplementary statement regarding work for grade expressed by the academic department in which he or she is taking a course, and with any special conditions provided in writing by the professor for a given assignment. If there is any doubt or uncertainty about the correct interpretation of a policy, the cadet should consult the instructor of the course. There should be no confusion, however, on the basic principle that it is never acceptable to submit someone else's work, written or otherwise, formally graded or not, as one's own.

The violation by a cadet of any of these policies will, if he or she is found guilty by the Honor Court, result in his or her being dismissed from VMI. Neither ignorance nor professed confusion about the correct interpretation of these policies is an excuse.

2) Faculty members' responsibilities

Each academic department will publish an official statement of supplementary departmental policies regarding work for grade, titled "Departmental Statement Concerning VMI's Policies Regarding Work for Grade." Each departmental statement will include explicit policies on the following: (a) tutoring* [e.g., Writing Center, Learning Center, athletic tutors, private tutors], (b) peer collaboration*, and (c) computer aids, including calculators, translators, spelling, style, and grammar checkers. Individual course assignments that deviate from the departmental work for grade policies must be approved by the department head in advance and must be explained to cadets in writing.

No departmental or individual assignment policies may contradict or compromise the Institutional principles expressed in the Academic Regulations, particularly notions of academic integrity and the requirement to document borrowed material and help received. Each departmental statement must be approved by the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty following review by the Academic Policy Committee of the Academic Board. A copy of the document must be filed with the Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent for

Academics and Dean of the Faculty, and the Superintendent's Representative to the Honor Court. Such a statement must be signed by the department head and must be posted in each classroom used by the department.

As an essential part of the duty of teaching and a matter of professional citizenship, faculty are expected to adhere to established work for grade policies and to communicate clearly and regularly with their cadets about the values and practices of academic honesty and integrity. Each faculty member must therefore include work for grade policies in a syllabus for every course he or she teaches. Each syllabus must include an exact transcription of the section titled "Cadets' Responsibilities" from "Work for Grade Policies" in the VMI Academic Regulations and a full statement of the established departmental policies regarding work for grade, plus any approved course-specific policies.

Furthermore, all faculty members are responsible for discussing with all of their students the details, definitions, and implications of (1) the entire section of the Academic Regulations entitled "Work for Grade Policies"; (2) the relevant sections on quotations, paraphrasing, and documentation in the current VMI-authorized handbook; and (3) the departmental and any approved course-specific policies regarding Work for Grade. This discussion must take place before any work is submitted for grade, and it should be treated with the gravity and level of detail that it merits.

Faculty must also review the Institute policy regarding the discussion of quizzes and exams with their classes. Specifically, faculty must remind cadets that they are prohibited from discussing the contents of a quiz/exam with anyone except the professor until it is returned to them or final course grades are posted.

If a member of the faculty believes that a cadet has violated one or more of VMI's, the department's, or the instructor's work for grade policies, he or she should report the evidence to the head of the department. The department head will decide whether the collected evidence justifies referral to the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty. If the department head decides that the evidence does not justify referral, then he or she will conclude the investigation. Otherwise, the department head will submit a written report to the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty. The report must contain both a recommendation for action and all relevant documents, including a statement signed by the faculty member who reported the violation.

The instructor will assign a grade of "I" following a formal charge of an Honor Court academic violation in his or her course until the issue is resolved.

* Departmental policies must include a statement on whether tutors and peers may offer cadets **critical comments** on their papers. Offering **critical comments** means giving general advice on such matters as organization, thesis

development, support for assertions, and patterns of errors. It does not include proofreading or editing.

Proofreading means correcting errors (e.g., in spelling, grammar, punctuation). It is the last step taken by the writer in the **editing** process. In addition to the corrections made in proofreading, **editing** includes making such changes as the addition, deletion, or reordering of paragraphs, sentences, phrases, or words. **A cadet may not have his or her work proofread or edited by someone other than the instructor. [Instructors may grant exceptions to this rule only if they have received written permission from the department head for a particular assignment.]**