How to Talk to Faculty about Avoiding Plagiarism

When and How to Talk to Faculty about a Potential Plagiarism Concern

• All professors must decide how to apply the University’s academic policies and requirements to their classes. If you have any questions about how the standards will be applied, it’s much better to ask the professor rather than not ask!
• The application of policies may also differ by field or by class (even with the same professor).
• Plagiarism standards also vary by national cultures and educational systems; international students in particular should educate themselves about standards and practices at UChicago before they talk to a professor (see web resources below).
• Definitely talk to a professor about your concerns BEFORE you turn in a project. If you let them know AFTERWARD, they will probably have to do a more formal kind of investigation to resolve a potential issue.
• Make sure that you know in advance how the professor wants to handle questions of plagiarism in relation to group projects (e.g., how to share data with student colleagues, when to cite or not cite their work).
• When you talk to a professor about a potential plagiarism issue, provide them with as much detail as possible about the situation. That will give them a better chance to assess the situation and will also make you look trustworthy!

Web Resources on Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism

UChicago:

• Academic Policies & Requirements from the UChicago Student Manual
• Office of International Affairs, “Honest Work and Academic Integrity: Plagiarism”
• The University of Chicago Library, “How the Library Can Support Academic Honesty”

Other Universities:

• Harvard’s Guide to Using Sources—this is a comprehensive site.
• Leeds University Library, Academic Integrity and Plagiarism—this site has a 60-minute online “academic integrity tutorial.”
• Northwestern Office of the Provost—with helpful examples of what constitutes or doesn’t constitute plagiarism.
• Purdue University Online Writing Lab—this writing program site has a well-built-up section on avoiding plagiarism, defining plagiarism, and best practices.