

US CULTURE 101

Spring 2019 International Student Orientation

Activity

- What have you found most surprising about the US?
- What is something you've noticed as very different between the US and your home country?
- Share an experience you've had in the US that has made you reflect upon your own culture.

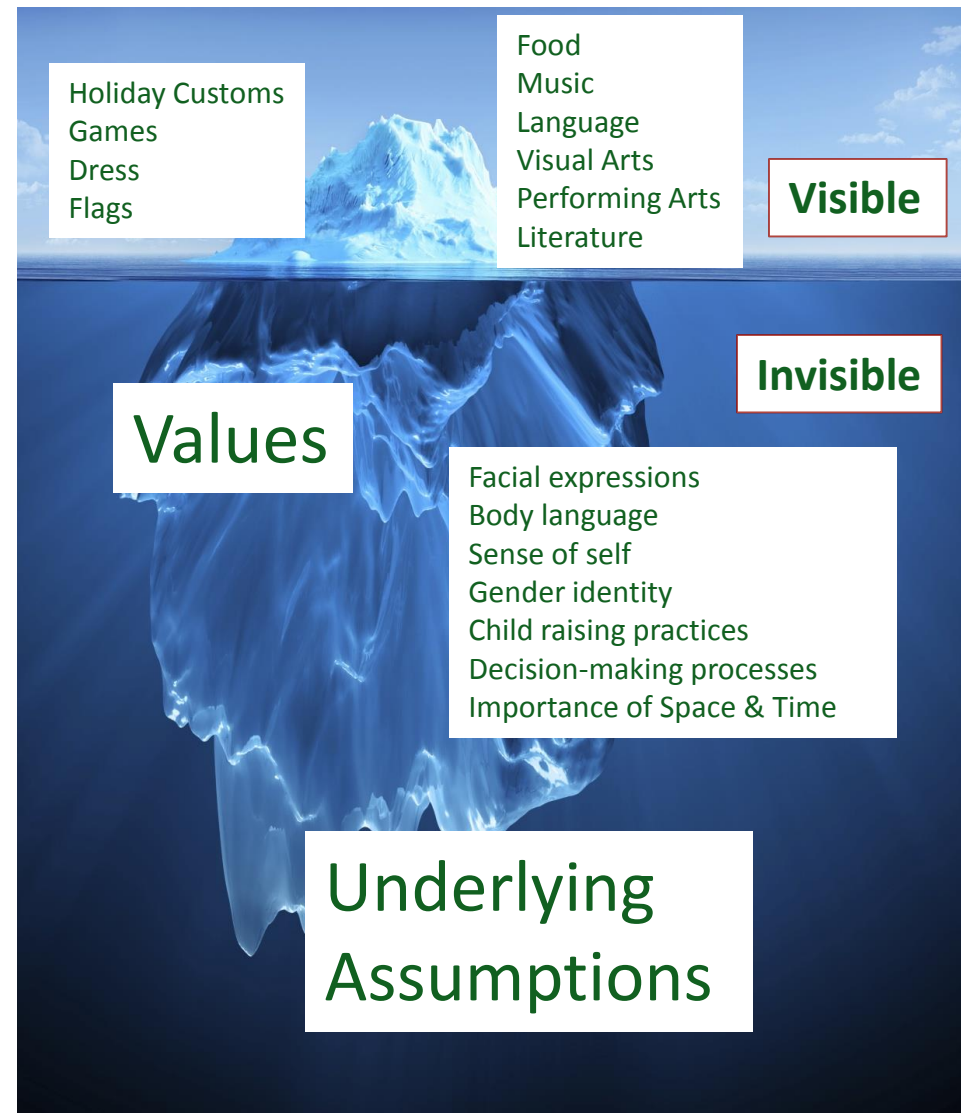
Navigating across cultures:

What is culture?

LEARNING ABOUT THE WORLD IS A PERSONAL JOURNEY



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Go beneath the waterline!



(Source: Iceberg Diving/Michael Heus)

A system of behavior that helps us act in an accepted or familiar way.

Keys to success:

- Knowledge of Self
 - Curiosity
 - Humility
 - Flexibility

Adjusting to a New Life at Mason and in the United States

VALUES IN AMERICAN CULTURE

1. PERSONAL CONTROL OVER THE ENVIRONMENT

People can/should control nature, their own environment and destiny. The future is not left to fate.

Result: An energetic, goal-oriented society.

2. CHANGE / MOBILITY

Change is seen as positive and good. This means progress, improvement and growth.

Result: An established transient society geographically, economically and socially.

3. TIME AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Time is valuable - achievement of goals depends on the productive use of time.

Result: An efficient and progressive society often at the expense of interpersonal relationships.

4. EQUALITY / EGALITARIANISM

People have equal opportunities; people are important as individuals, for who they are, not from which family they come.

Result: A society where little deference is shown or status is acknowledged.

5. INDIVIDUALISM, INDEPENDENCE AND PRIVACY

People are seen as separate individuals (not group members) with individual needs. People need time to be alone and to be themselves.

Result: Americans may be seen as self-centered and sometimes isolated and lonely.

6. SELF-HELP

Americans take pride in their own accomplishments.

Result: Americans give respect for self achievements not achievements based on rights of birth.

7. COMPETITION AND FREE ENTERPRISE

Americans believe competition brings out the best in people and free enterprise leads to progress and produces success

Result: Competition is emphasized over cooperation.

8. FUTURE ORIENTATION / OPTIMISM

Americans believe that, regardless of past or present, the future will be better and happier.

Result: Americans place less value on past events and constantly look ahead to tomorrow.

9. ACTION AND WORK ORIENTATION

Americans believe that work is morally right; that it is immoral to waste time.

Result: There is more emphasis on "doing" rather than "being". This is a no-nonsense attitude toward life.

10. INFORMALITY

Americans believe that formality is "un-American" and a show of arrogance and superiority.

Result: A casual, egalitarian attitude between people is more accepted.

11. DIRECTNESS / OPENNESS / HONESTY

One can only trust people who "look you in the eye" and "tell it like it is". Truth is a function of reality not of circumstance.

Result: People tend to tell the "truth" and not worry about saving the other person's "face" or "honor".

12. PRACTICALITY / EFFICIENCY

Practicality is usually the most important consideration when decisions are to be made.

Result: Americans place less emphasis on the subjective, aesthetic, emotional or consensual decisions.

13. MATERIALISM / ACQUISITIVENESS

Material goods are seen as the just rewards of hard-work, the evidence of "God's favor."

Result: Americans are seen as caring more for things than people or relationships.

Cultural Transitions



➤ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/08/america-guide-englishman-new-york>

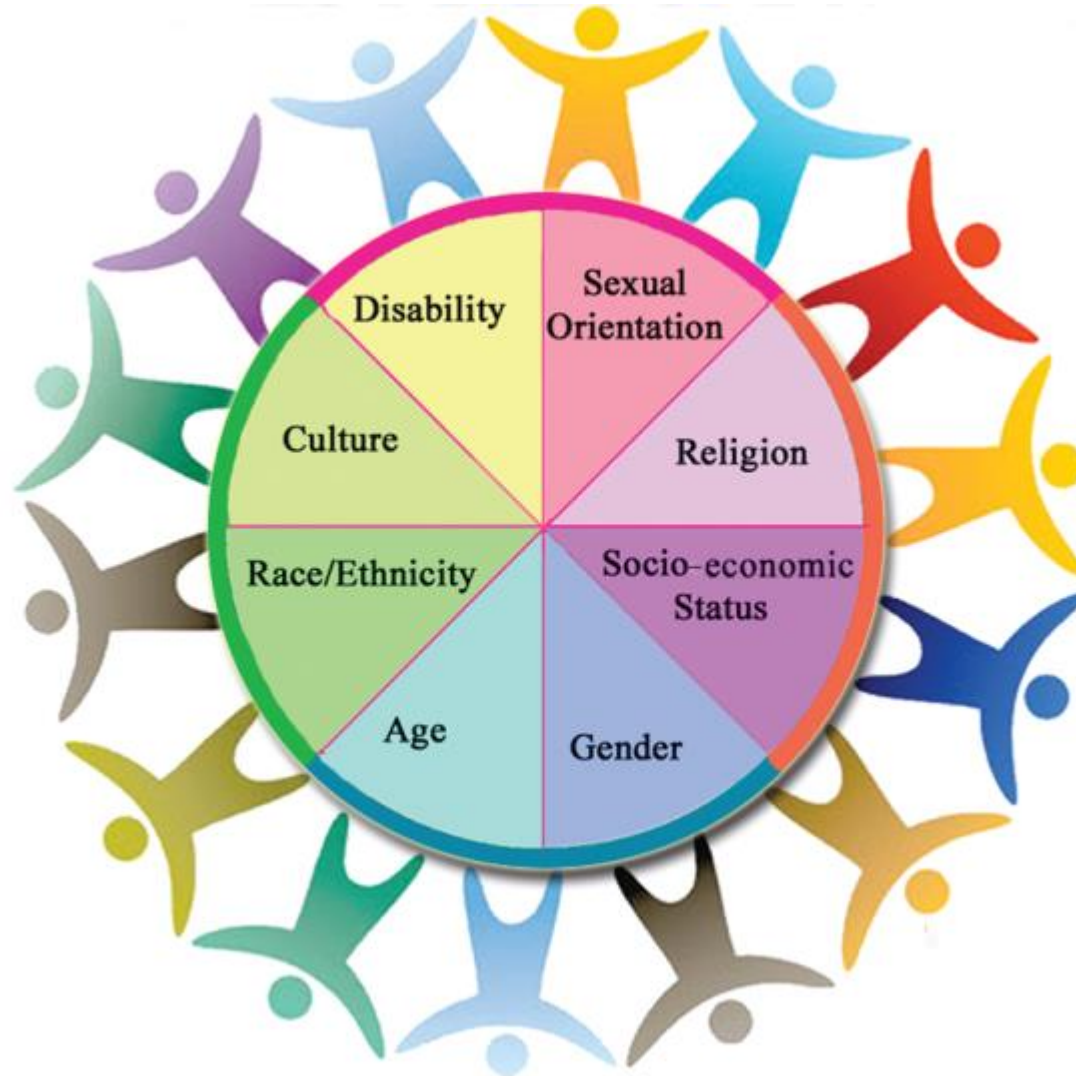
➤ What cultural differences and similarities have you experienced while living in the US?

WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

Diversity & GMU Students



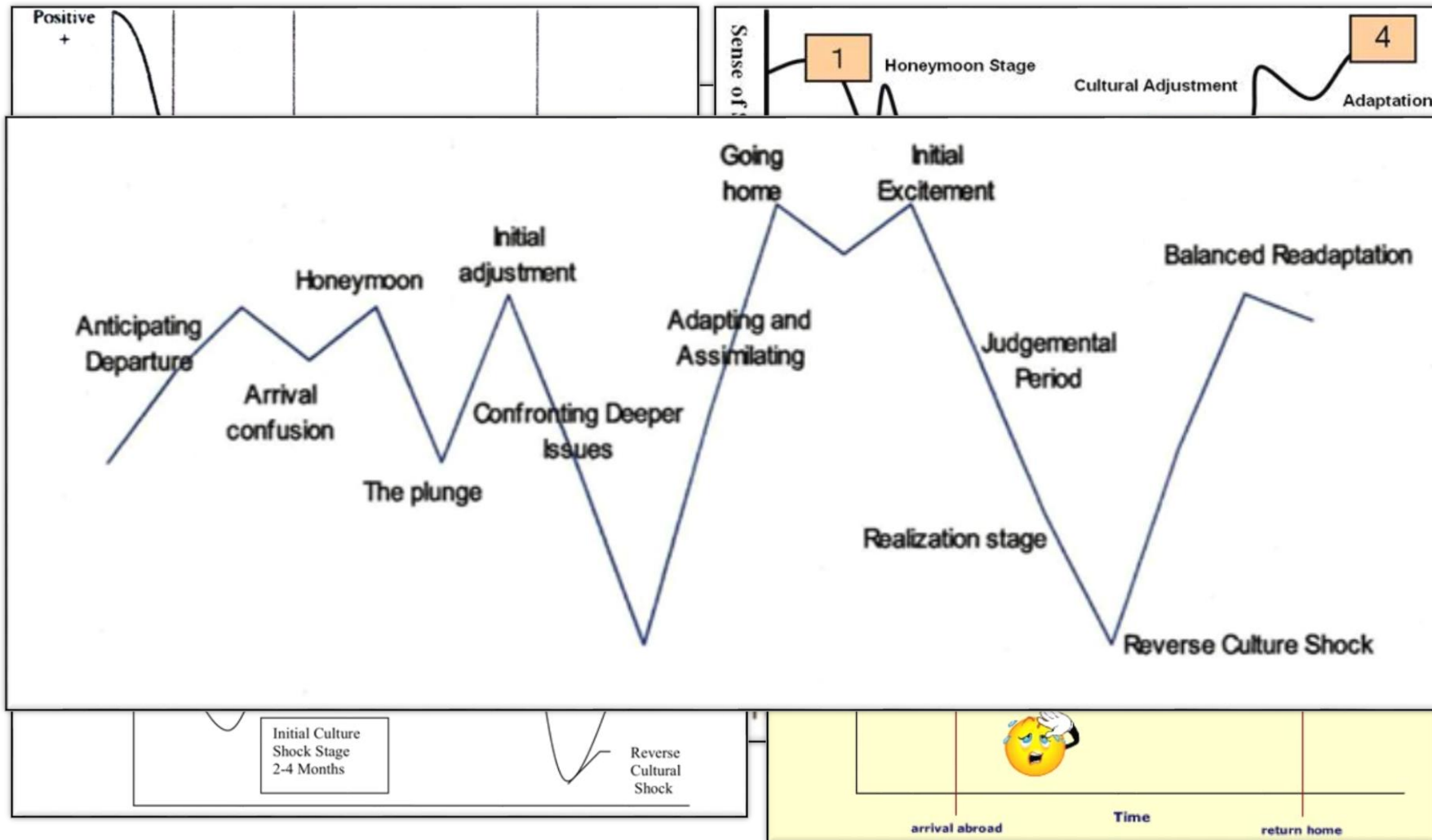
What is Diversity?



Transition Experiences

- Culture Surprise
- Culture Stress
- Culture Shock

The Ups and Downs of Culture Shock





You might become homesick! What to do?



- Find friends from your home country and have a good time
- Skype with your family from home
- Introduce your new friends to food, music, culture from your home country
- Discover the best of the country through getting involved

CULTURE SHOCK!

Signs

- Extreme homesickness
- Withdrawal from people who are different from you
- A new and intense feeling of loyalty to your own culture
- Unexplainable fits of crying
- Difficulty concentrating
- And more...

What to do?

- Keep active & exercise
- Make American friends & ask questions
- Join groups
- Meet other international students
- Work on your English
- Remember your family
- Be patient and open-minded

Intensity Factors & Self-awareness

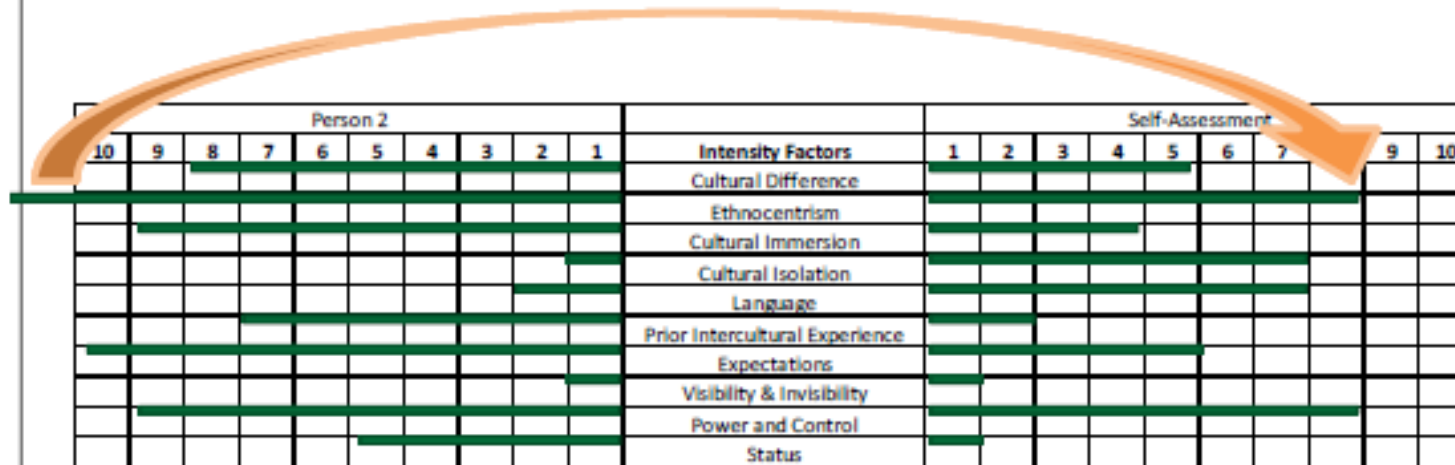
- Cultural Differences
- Ethnocentrism
- Cultural Immersion
- Cultural Isolation
- Language
- Prior Intercultural Experience
- Power and Control
- Status
- Expectations
- Visibility and Invisibility

(Source: Paige, R.M. (ed.). Education for the Intercultural Experience. (pp. 1-19.) Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.)

Intensity Factors

On a scale of 1 to 10, how intense will these factors be for your intercultural interactions?

How is the distance between you and the other person affecting your ability to communicate effectively?



ROOMMATES, YAY OR NAY?

Pros

- Built-in friends
- Potential for long-lasting friendship
- Shared responsibilities
- Increase social skills
- It is easy to request favors/get help

Cons

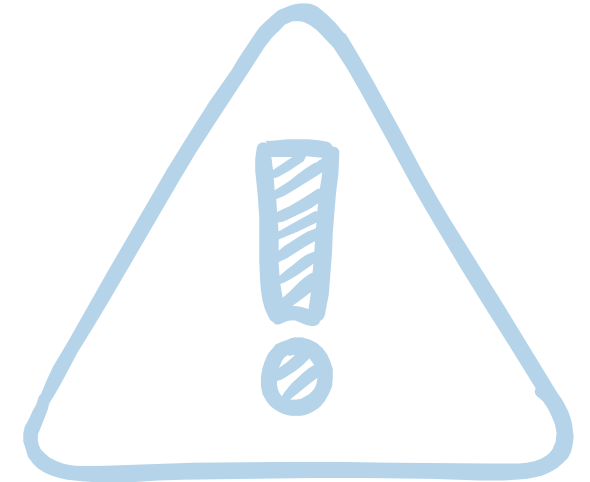
- Conflict is a thing
- Distraction from studying
- No privacy
- Different schedules
- Personality differences

Solve Roommate Conflict

- Honest and polite communication
- Know when to pick your battles
- Respect different views and compromise
- Know how to create change

BE MINDFUL ABOUT YOUR SAFETY!

- The U.S. is not a dangerous country, in fact, it is safe 😊
- Common safety precaution is relevant everywhere
- Safety Tips for Students
 - Be observant
 - Avoid walking alone at night, check for [campus escort services](#)
 - Never, ever leave your personal unattended and walk away.
 - Never open the door for strangers—it is a part of the American culture to talk through doors without opening them if we don't know the person
 - Personal Information: beware of scams!
 - Safely store copies of your passports, visa, I-94 and other important documents



WHAT TO DO IN YOUR FIRST MONTH HERE?

- Familiarize yourself with the culture
- Get a sense of location
- Choose your place to live
- Attend the University's activities
- Be part of a group
- Be productive
- Don't be afraid to explore
- Be flexible with your surroundings
- Don't judge and don't stereotype
- Search for your customs
- Understand that it is fine to feel alone sometimes
- Have a clear goal

HAVE FUN AND LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN!

The American Classroom



- Addressing professors/lecturers
 - Establish rapport out of class
- Your syllabus is a contract
- Dress code & behavior in class
- Communication styles (speak up, class discussion)
- Honor Code (no plagiarism, group vs. independent work)

What is the GMU Honor Code?

- An agreement between students and the University
- Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.
- Mason's Commitment: To create an environment that is innovative, diverse, entrepreneurial, and accessible-helping you avoid accidental or intentional violations of the Honor Code

How does Mason define Cheating?

- Use of unauthorized assistance
- Use of unauthorized material
- Providing or benefitting from unauthorized academic material
- Submission of another individual's work
- Duplicate use of student's work
- Violation of course requirements regarding integrity

How does Mason define Plagiarism?

- Self-plagiarism
- Inadequate citation
- False citation
- Failure to quote sources/material

with separable preposition prefixes (Fischer et al. 2000: 182; Williams 1970: 286; Strang 1974: 275). For example, the Modern German *aufwachen* meaning 'to wake up' and the Modern Dutch *uitlachen* meaning 'to laugh at' both consist of the separable preposition prefixes *auf* and *uit* and the verbs *wachen* and *lachen* (Fischer et al 2000: 182). When verbs with separable preposition prefixes are conjugated, however, the preposition prefix "separates" from the beginning of the verb to the end of the predicate phrase as in *ich wache morgens auf* meaning "I wake up in the morning." Phrasal verbs, single semantic units formed by a verb phrase followed by a marooned preposition such as *wake up*, only developed in the English language during the Middle English Period (Smith 2005: 104).

According to Barbara M. H. Strang in *A History of English* (1974: 275), the separable nature of certain intransitive verbs with preposition prefixes produced many patterns in which the separated preposition prefix immediately followed the verb as in the Modern German *du kommst auf* meaning "you arise" or "you get up" and *wir kommen an* meaning "we arrive." Such syntax in which the preposition followed instead of preceded the verb became the preferred word order in English, which consequently developed into the modern phrasal verb (Strang 1974: 275). The English phrasal verb is therefore a

How does Mason define Lying?

- Falsifying sources, data, or information
- Providing a false excuse for missing a test or class
- Providing false information, including identifying information
- Falsifying official correspondence

How does Mason define Stealing?

- Removing an exam from a classroom without authorization
- Taking someone else's work without their knowledge
- Taking photos of exams/academic work without authorization or permission

How to Avoid a Violation

- Understand the Honor Code expectations for each course and ask your professor questions
- Understand what materials you can and cannot use for each assignment
- Know the citation styles required for the class (MLA, APA, Chicago style)
- Understand how to properly cite materials and how to properly paraphrase
- Proofread your work!
- Always work by yourself unless your professor gives you permission to work with others
- Submit your own work
- Protect your work
- Do not submit the same assignment twice unless your professor gives you permission to reuse an assignment
- Use campus resources if you are allowed!

Campus Resources

- Writing Center
- Learning Services
- Library
- Office of Academic Integrity
- <https://oips.gmu.edu/managing-your-academic-workload>

Potential Consequences of a Violation

- Assignment Rewrite
 - Zero on the assignment
 - Grade Reduction
 - F in the course
 - Academic Integrity Seminar
 - Writing Center Visits
 - Avoiding Plagiarism Seminar
 - Program Dismissal
 - Suspension
 - Permanent Dismissal from Mason
- First violations typically result in an F in the course.
 - Second violations typically result in an F in the course and suspension. Suspensions can range from one semester to one year.
 - Third violations typically result in long-term suspension or expulsion.
 - These sanctions vary depending on the specifics of a case, whether the student is undergraduate or graduate level, and individual college/program regulations

Future Impact of a Violation

- All cases where a student is found responsible remain on record for 3 years and are potentially reportable in a background check during this 3 year time period. Additionally, if a student applies to another school during this 3 year time period, they will typically have to report the violation to the transfer or graduate school.
- A notation does not appear on the transcript unless the student is suspended or permanently dismissed from Mason.
- Cases involving suspension remain on record for 3 years and a suspension notation will remain on the student's transcript for the period of the suspension.
- Cases involving expulsion remain on record permanently and a notation remains on the transcript.
- If a student is found not in violation of an Honor Code violation, the student has no record with the Office of Academic Integrity and case information is not reported to any outside sources.

Scenario 1

- You are enrolled in a course that prohibits collaboration on assignments. Your friend in the course is having a hard time understanding the material and asks for your help in completing his homework assignment.
 - What should you do in this situation?

Scenario 1

- Tell your friend no and refer him to the professor or the teaching assistant.
- Helping him would result in an Honor Code violation for both of you.
- Also let your friend know that he should do his best work and it is better to fail the assignment than to fail and have an honor code violation.

Scenario 2

- Your classmate asks to see your assignment as a “guide” and promises she will not use your assignment to complete hers.
 - What are the dangers in letting her see your assignment? What should you do?

Scenario 2

- You can never be sure that someone will not use your assignment. They may feel pressure and end up submitting your assignment as theirs, which could cause you to end up with an honor code violation.
- You should also avoid giving them any hints on the assignment.
- Refer them to the professor or the teaching assistant. Also let them know they should do their own best work and it is better to fail the assignment than to fail and have an honor code violation.

Scenario 3

- You are taking a course that requires you to write a business plan. You are excited because you already wrote a business plan in another course and want to reuse your paper.
 - What are some things to consider in this situation?

Scenario 3

- What is the course policy on reusing your work from a previous semester?
- Always ask your professor for permission to reuse your work.
- If you do not ask your professor and submit work that you previously submitted then this is an honor code violation.

Scenario 4

- You and your friend are both enrolled in the same course. You have a homework assignment due in 2 hours. You have already completed and submitted the assignment. Your friend's computer dies and asks to use your computer to complete her assignment.
 - How should you approach this situation?

Scenario 4

- We advise students not to let anyone use their computer to complete assignments.
- Sometimes your friend can steal your assignment or produce work that is too similar to yours after they have looked at your assignment on your computer.
- This can cause you to end up with an honor code violation.
- Tell your friend to immediately email the professor to explain the situation.

Scenario 5

- You begin to experience some difficulties during the semester and are having a hard time keeping up with your assignments.
 - To avoid an honor code violation, what should you do?

Scenario 5

- What resources on campus can help you work through your difficulties?
 - Student support, counseling, writing center, learning services.
- Talk to your professors. They might be able to give you extensions on assignments (this is not a guarantee, but it can't hurt to talk to them).