ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism by all group members

Scenario: The groups have handed in their progress or final report and while reading them it becomes obvious that one group has failed to cite all their sources, have copied sections of their paper either from published texts or have downloaded from the internet and have in fact presented these ideas as their own.

In some ways this is the easiest of the problems to manage in terms of academic honesty. Once you have determined a breach is intentional because the entire group is aware of their plagiarism in the written assessment, then you can deal with it as you would an individual case. See Academic Board Resolutions: ‘Academic Honesty in Coursework’ and ‘Plagiarism: student coursework- policy and procedures’ (go to www.usyd.edu.au/academic/about/polices.html and follow the ‘Policy online’ link).

Plagiarism by one group member (without the knowledge of the others)

Scenario: The group has handed in their progress or final report and it becomes obvious that certain sections of the paper have been copied from other sources. You contact the group to come and see you and when asked about this they deny knowledge of the plagiarism, till finally one group member states that it was their section that was plagiarised, but the rest of the group were unaware that this had happened.

This situation again requires you to first determine whether the breach was intentional. If so then action will need to be taken in accordance with the Academic Board Resolutions. Although the rest of the group may have been unaware of the plagiarism, it should be pointed out to them that as they were all placing their names to the document concerned, they did have a responsibility to read the document in its entirety and to be responsible for the content. This point needs to be stressed at the beginning of the unit of study and it is very useful to include a statement regarding academic dishonesty in your Unit of Study outline. Also include the web link to the related Academic Board Resolutions (see above).

Unauthorised sharing between groups by one group member

Scenario: It comes to your attention either during the undertaking of the group work project or at its conclusion, that individuals from within different groups were sharing confidential information. The project in question required distinct, creative, and confidential problem solving and decision making, and design. Peer group members in both groups were unaware that information had been shared.

Again the situation requires you to first determine intention. In this case, assuming you have very clearly explained and clarified the need for distinct, creative and confidential work, this unauthorised sharing would signify a breach but only by the individual students, not the entire group. Again your course of action is as per the Academic Board Resolutions. There may be other cases where the breach is not so obviously intentional and great care must be taken when dealing with this situation.
Sharing and collusion

Scenario: During a group work project it is brought to your attention that some groups or students from different groups have been sharing both information and workload, thus forming groups between and within groups. This was not the objective of the assessment.

Student collaboration in this circumstance is outside the boundaries of legitimate cooperation. Such collusion can be considered a breach of academic honesty and there is little doubt that it is intentional for those students in question. As with every situation in this section any action taken to address the breach must be done in accordance within the guidelines of the Academic Board Resolutions.