Academic Honesty @ York

Alex's Scenario: Group Assignment Plagiarism

Welcome to Academic Honesty at York: Alex's Scenario (Group Assignment Plagiarism).

Meet Alex! Alex is assigned a project where he has to collaboratively write a paper with a group. Alex doesn't feel like a strong writer and hasn't made a lot of friends at York so far, so group projects have been really stressful for him.

While watching his classmates add their parts of the paper to the shared document, Alex gets very worried about the quality of his writing and what his classmates will think. The deadline is fast approaching, and Alex doesn't want to let his group members down. He's not sure what to do.

While researching Alex read an article that really resonated with him. It sounded like everything Alex would say himself but even better! Alex decides that it's safer to just copy and paste his sections of the paper from the research article and impress his group. Alex thinks they'll all get a better mark that way.

Did Alex make an academically honest choice?

Reflection point: Take a moment to reflect on Alex's scenario and what you already know about academic honesty. What does academic honesty mean to you?

Before submitting the assignment one of Alex's group members notices the paragraphs are copy and pasted because she read the same article earlier. His contribution also stood out because it was written so unlike his emails. She decides to reach out to Alex and explain why what he did is academically dishonest, and can get both him and the group in trouble. She also suggests Alex go to the writing center and library to work on his writing and citing skills. The writing center really helped improve her writing and she hoped it would help Alex as well.

Alex's group member did the right thing by saying something, but whether Alex was caught or not he committed plagiarism. He was being academically dishonest, which can have an impact on his assignment class grade or transcript. In this scenario, plagiarism means taking the words or ideas of another and passing them off as one's own without properly citing.

But more than that because York students know and use the supports available to them:

- Alex could have reached out to his groupmates, professor, or TA, or the writing center to get help with his writing.
- He could have practiced his writing and had larger conversations in the York community as to how he could improve his writing, his groupmates may have had the same fears.
- Knowing where and when to get help is essential for building lifelong skills like teamwork, communication, and collaboration.

Now that we know what Alex did is academically dishonest let's think about why he used someone else's work as his own. Alex doesn't feel confident in his abilities as a writer. He hoped this would help get the group a better grade. Alex really wanted to impress his group members, and he didn't know where to get help. These are all understandable reasons to make that choice, but they still result in academically dishonest behavior.

Academic honesty is a set of practices that academics follow in their work, and which generates credibility, trust, and respect within the academic community. Knowing this how can Alex move forward to make more academically honest choices?

- *Alex isn't confident in his abilities:* It can be hard to be confident about your abilities when trying something new or encountering new challenges like writing at university. It's important to remember that every skill worth learning requires practice.
- *He hoped this would help the group get a better grade:* Working with others to complete an assignment together takes time and patience. Alex can share his fears or work more closely with his group to achieve a good collaborative final product.
- *Alex wanted to impress his group members:* It's really easy to feel isolated as a student and want to make friends however you can, but being honest with group members is a better way to connect.
- *Alex didn't know where to get help:* There are all sorts of places to get help at York. If you don't know where to start, talk to your professor or TA, or even your group members. It might be a good idea to all get help together.

If you get into a situation like Alex's, here are some academically honest solutions you could try.

- Get help from the writing center and library to develop your writing and citing skills.
- Focus on the process, not the grade.
- Don't keep your fears and worries to yourself, connect with classmates by being honest about how you're feeling.
- And help your classmates understand that submitting work that is not their own is considered plagiarism.

Submitting others' work as your own is academically dishonest this can result in academic consequences.

Because York students know and use the supports available to them: Don't cheat yourself out of a sense of belonging! Succeed together!

Reflection Question:

If you were in Alex's position, how would you move forward?

a) By getting support from the Writing Centre to improve your writing and citing skills.

b) By talking to your professor or TA, if you need additional help and don't know where to find it.

c) By remembering that every skill worth learning takes practice.

d) By reaching out to group members to share your worries, connect, and work more closely together on the assignment.

Responses:

a) Yes, because the Writing Centre is an excellent resource that is there to support you as a York student to help you develop your writing and citing skills. The other choices are also good options for moving forward.

b) Yes, because your Professor and TA are there to help and can guide you to the support you need. The other choices are also good options for moving forward.

c) Yes, because practicing new skills is an essential part of your education. Practice helps increase confidence! The other choices are also good options for moving forward.

d) Yes, because your classmates may be feeling the same and this way you can support each other to finish the project. The other choices are also good options for moving forward.