

# USEFP News

THE UNITED STATES EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION IN PAKISTAN

JUNE 30TH 2009

## The Power of Study Groups

### Two Heads Are Better Than One

Have you ever noticed that when you explain something you've learned in class to a friend, you begin to understand it better yourself? This happens because when you explain, or teach, an idea, you need to actively think it through. And by thinking more deeply about what you've learned and then explaining it to someone else, you begin to understand it better.

Studying with others in a small group is helpful to everyone because, as in the example above, you

- Think out loud.
- Share ideas.
- Learn from one another.

As the old saying goes, "Two heads are better than one." While studying alone may work well for things such as memorizing facts, sometimes you'll need to understand complicated ideas. And rather than memorize facts, you'll be required to apply facts to solving problems. Effective study groups involve hashing out lesson materials together—explaining concepts, arguing about them, figuring out why one person's answer differs from another's—and in the process, you learn more than you ever would have studying by yourself.

#### THE BENEFITS OF STUDY GROUPS

Group study offers other advantages, in addition to gaining a deeper understanding of class material. These include the following:

#### NOTE-TAKING REINFORCEMENT:

Took horrible notes in AP® French last week? No worries! A member of your study group can share his.

#### SHARING TALENTS:

Each person brings different strengths to a study group, such as organizational skills, the ability to stick to a task, a talent for memorization, and so on.

#### COVERING MORE GROUND:

Three study group members may be able to solve a calculus problem that



Group Study: The Results may surprise you!

none would have solved alone.

#### SUPPORT SYSTEM:

Members of a study group often have common goals, such as good grades. The work each person in a group does affects the other members, which results in making the group members supportive of one another.

#### SOCIALIZING:

It's more fun to study with others. And because it's more fun, you spend more time studying!

#### GUIDELINES FOR GETTING A GROUP TOGETHER

How do you put a study group together? How many members should the group have? For how long should you meet? For answers to these questions and more, check out the following study group guidelines:

#### HOW MANY?

Create a group of four to six people. In a larger group, it's easy for someone to get left out, and smaller groups can too easily get off track.

#### WHO?

Pick classmates who seem to share your interest in doing well in class. Look for people who stay alert in class,

take notes, ask questions, and respond to the teacher's questions. John Mitchell, who has researched group work at Central Michigan University, suggests including in your study group "someone who understands the material better than you and someone who understands less." Doing so will provide you with someone who can explain concepts to you and someone to whom you can explain the material.

#### WHERE?

Hold study group sessions in a place that is free of distractions and that has room to spread out books, and notes.

#### HOW LONG?

Study groups should meet for no more than two to three hours at a time. Having a time limit will help the group focus. If you know you only have an hour, you're more likely to stay on task.

#### WHEN?

If possible, try to meet on the same day and time each week. Treating the study session as you would other activities helps you to keep to a schedule and ensures that everyone will attend.

#### GETTING THE MOST OUT OF A STUDY GROUP SESSION

The greatest benefit of studying with a group of classmates is the support you receive from one another. Here are some tips to help your group get the most out of each study session:

#### STATE OBJECTIVES OR GOALS.

Knowing what you want to achieve at each session helps the group stay focused and manage time. At the start of each meeting, a designated session leader should state what the goals are. For example, the session leader might announce, "Today we'll review chapter 7 and discuss the theorems introduced in class on Wednesday."

#### BE PREPARED.

Before a session, be sure to finish your assigned reading, review notes, and list topics you want to go over. By being well prepared, your group can make the most of your time together by questioning one another on the assigned material.

#### TAKE TURNS TEACHING.

When you instruct the group, you not only help the other group members, but also reinforce your own knowledge.

#### STAY ON TOPIC.

For each session, assign one member to be the taskmaster. This person's job is to steer the group members back to the topic if they begin to drift. Also, schedule five-minute breaks into your study sessions after every half hour or so of work. This allows all the group members to get off-topic chatting out of their systems.

By supplementing your individual study with a study group, you can reinforce what you've learned, deepen your understanding of complex concepts, and maybe even make a few new friends. Whoever said learning can't be fun?

Article from:  
[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

# Plagiarism from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

An Article by David L. Di Maria

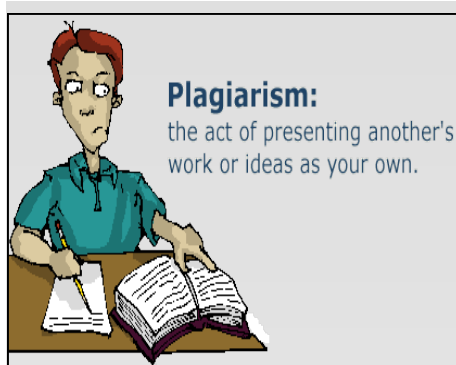
Plagiarism may be defined as taking another person's work and presenting it as one's own. This action may typically be categorized under one of two headings: intentional and unintentional.

Intentional plagiarists are those who knowingly break the U.S. American rules governing accepted standards of academic conduct. The reasons for violating established standards of academic conduct may include internal and external pressures to succeed, inability or lack of confidence in one's ability to express thoughts in English and rejection of U.S. cultural norms as are applicable to academic behavior.

Unintentional plagiarists are those who unwittingly break the U.S. American rules of academic conduct. Factors leading to unintentional violations often include ignorance of U.S. American expectations for academic conduct, lack of training in the use of citation styles and differences in cultural values.

Intentional or not, plagiarism is considered a very serious infraction at U.S. American universities. In fact, plagiarism is often described as the theft of another's intellectual property. While such an abstract notion of property may sound strange, from the U.S. American perspective a student who fails to distinguish his or her own thoughts from ideas borrowed from others commits the same crime as one who steals money from a stranger and then claims that money as his or her own.

Schools expect students to behave ethically and embrace common values, but behaviors and values that are accepted in one culture may differ significantly from what is accepted in another. As with most violations of a culture's accepted standards of behavior, a violation of academic ethics carries serious consequences for the violator. For instance, a single act of plagiarism can result in a failing grade, temporary suspension or even permanent expulsion from the univer-



sity. Moreover, student violators may find it difficult to obtain letters of recommendation from former professors and may be required to disclose previous incidents of academic misconduct to other institutions or employers. Obviously, plagiarism is a very serious issue, but how can international students studying in the U.S.A. understand academic ethics within the context of the U.S. American national culture? How does one learn the rules of this culture?

## Cultural Values

In seeking to understand the U.S. American perspective on plagiarism, one must first understand two commonly held U.S. American cultural values: individualism and direct communication.

The cultural value of individualism requires students to respect the rights of individuals whose ideas they have borrowed by clearly distinguishing another's ideas from one's own and using an established method for doing so. Individualists also expect students not share answers on an exam or even discuss the questions with friends who may need to take the exam at a later time in the day.

Magied Alsqoor, an international student from Saudi Arabia and President of the International Students Association at St. Cloud State University, explains the influence of cultural values as follows:

*I think people in Saudi Arabia are very close to each other and so we grow up*

*helping each other. It's a good thing, but it becomes a problem for Saudis in the U.S. We often get out of an exam and share questions with others and we think it's a common thing because we grow up in a society that tells us to share things and wish the best for your friends. In Saudi Arabia, your accomplishments are not recorded by your name, but by your tribe or family. For instance, when a guy from Najran succeeds, it's considered as a success for the whole city. In the U.S. this is not the case.*

A second cultural value in the U.S.A. is direct communication. This means that U.S. Americans prefer messages that are explicit and very low in context. As an example, clear expectations for academic behavior are commonly found printed in university publications such as a Student Code of Conduct, Honor Code, or Institutional Statement on Academic Integrity. The idea is that by providing students with easy access to the accepted standards of conduct, accidental violations of academic ethics will be greatly reduced.

## Conclusion

Before beginning classes, it is a good idea to search the website of the institution one wishes to attend in order to locate and familiarize oneself with academic expectations. After arrival, one should be able to find many resources exist at the university for helping students to avoid plagiarism. If unsure of how to properly use citation styles, seek assistance from a professor, librarian or writing center staff (if applicable). If cultural values seem to pose a challenge, speak with the international student advisor or a leader of the international student community who is mature enough to provide cultural insights.

David L. Di Maria is the Assistant Director, International Student and Scholar Services at St. Cloud State University. This article was published online on the Al Jamiat website: <http://www.al-jamiat.com/college-lifestyle/plagiarism-crosscultural-perspective/>

# SEVIS Changes for 2009-2010

## Advise for Students and Exchange Visitors

The United States uses a Web-based data base to monitor the entry, presence and exit of international students, exchange visitors and their dependents. Currently, the school which accepts you will enter the necessary data into SEVIS, the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, and will issue you a Form I-20 which allows you to apply for student (F-1 or M-1 visa) or exchange visitor (J-1) visa. SEVIS data is used by many government agencies which you will encounter in your journey to the United States: the US embassy or consulate where you will apply for your visa, the US Customs and Border Protection which will review your documents when you apply to enter the US at a port of entry, and the colleges, universities and programs where you will study.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program which manages SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) is planning major improvements in SEVIS. The new database - called SEVIS II - will be implemented in two phases, the first beginning in October 2009. The planned advanced upgrades will make it easier for all users to navigate and use the system.

The new system is based on the idea that there will be one - and only one - SEVIS record for each person. If you are a student or exchange visitor, you

and your dependents will each have one record for your entire relationship with the US immigration system. This will be possible through the use of an Immigration Identification Number or IIN - a unique identifier component.

What does this mean for you?

If you are currently attending school in the U.S. your school will tell you when and how to create this unique identifier, sometime in the last three months of 2009. Creating this account will require you to enter personal data from your travel documents for yourself and your dependents into a web-based application. If you are a student under the age of 18 or if you require the assistance of someone to help you create the account, your parent or legal guardian may do so. Your school will review your application and make changes to correct it.

SEVIS II will also match all records that belong to the same individual. Students will be asked to validate that the records being matched do, in fact, belong to them. They will also have the opportunity to identify records that belong to them that the system may not have identified as theirs.

Once SEVIS II is fully implemented in 2010, you will use your IIN to

access SEVIS II -again online - to review your record, make changes to your personal information such as a change in your physical address, and ask your school to correct mistakes in your record.

If you are not a continuing student, but a new student who is planning on starting your studies in 2010 when SEVIS II is fully implemented, your process for obtaining your IIN will be slightly different. You will access the SEVIS website to create your account, which will then be made available to all the schools to which you apply.

Once they accept you, they will create a SEVIS record for you based upon the information you have entered. If you have applied to more than one school you will have to decide which school you wish to attend. Once you decide on a particular school, all

of the other electronic records created by all of the other schools will be eliminated. When you apply for the appropriate visa, you will no longer have a paper Form I-20; the embassy or consulate will just check SEVIS II to verify your data. The creation of a one person-one record system based upon IINs means that SEVIS II will be paperless. Your visa will

be issued to reflect the school of your choice.

What this means is that once you register in SEVIS, which is your responsibility, it will now be a "one person, one record" system. The improved system will not be complicated. In fact, it's going to make it easier for you by saving you time, reducing data entry inconsistencies and duplications. SEVIS II will also help eliminate document fraud.

SEVP is planning many different ways to get you information about the account set-up process and your role with SEVIS II and will work with schools, programs, and the EducationUSA Advising Centers affiliated with US embassies abroad to make sure that you have all the information you need to make this transition to SEVIS II effortless.

Check the SEVP website at [www.ice.gov/sevis](http://www.ice.gov/sevis) for updates on this process, but remember that while you are an international student in the US, your international student advisor at your school is your best source for information.

*Information provided by SEVP, ICE - March 2009*

### **UPCOMING EVENTS AT USEFP, JULY 2009:**

#### **USEFP Islamabad:**

An Undergraduate Liberal Arts Presentation will be taking place on Wednesday, July 1st 2009 at 3:30pm

A web chat with the U.S Embassy on the topic of "U.S Education" will be taking place on Thursday, July 2nd 2009 at 2:30pm

A Pre Departure Orientation Seminar is scheduled for Friday, July 10th 2009 and Friday, July 24th 2009 at 10:30am

#### **USEFP Lahore:**

A Pre Departure Orientation Seminar is scheduled for Friday, July 17th 2009 at 3:00pm

#### **USEFP Karachi:**

A Visa Seminar will take place every Wednesday of the month at 3:00pm

A Graduate Education Presentation will be held every Thursday of the month at 3:00pm

An Undergraduate Education Presentation will be held every Friday of the month at 3:30pm

A Pre Departure Orientation Seminar is scheduled for Tuesday, July 7th 2009 and Tuesday, July 21st 2009 at 2:00pm

**Pease contact your local office to register for upcoming events and receive additional information:**

**Islamabad:** [advising@usefpakistan.org](mailto:advising@usefpakistan.org); **Karachi:** [advisingkarachi@usefpakistan.org](mailto:advisingkarachi@usefpakistan.org); **Lahore:** [lahoreadvising@usefpakistan.org](mailto:lahoreadvising@usefpakistan.org)

# Upcoming Test Dates for TOEFL, GRE, and SAT

## SAT:

General and Subject Test

### **Test Dates:**

October 10th, 2009

November 07th, 2009

December 05th, 2009

January 23rd, 2010

May 01st, 2010

June 05th, 2010

### **International Registration:**

Please check for early registration options for international candidates.

## iBT TOEFL:

### **Test Dates:**

October 10th, 2009

October 18th, 2009

October 24th, 2009

October 25th, 2009

October 31st, 2009

November 01st, 2009

November 08th, 2009

November 14th, 2009

November 21st, 2009

November 22nd, 2009

December 05th, 2009

December 12th, 2009

December 20th, 2009

## GRE:

The GRE Test is offered four days a week, Monday through Thursday, throughout the year.

Please visit our website or call in order to register for a particular test day.



### **United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan**

P.O Box 1128, Islamabad

Phone: 92-51-2877075,2877076,2201404

UAN:11-11-USEFP (11-11-87337)

Fax: 92-51-2877095

E-mail: [advising@usefpakistan.org](mailto:advising@usefpakistan.org)