

CS1420 Collaboration Policy

Spring 2024

1 Introduction

The course staff needs to be able to evaluate each student in CS1420 as fairly and individually as possible, but we also want to maximize the teaching opportunities for everyone. To provide guidance, we have written this collaboration policy and we expect all students to abide by it. Please read this policy carefully, as it may differ from collaboration policies in CS classes you have taken previously.

We strongly encourage teaching and learning with your peers. At the same time, your work must, in the end, represent your own understanding of the material. In that spirit, our overall policy is that you can talk about almost anything and work out solutions together, but *your final handin must be your own work and cannot be shared or copied in any way.*

You are encouraged to talk to other students about the content of the lectures and of the assignments and any high-level concepts or background material, but please ensure that, in doing so, you are not violating any of the following policies.

2 Homework Assignments

We encourage you to discuss homework assignments with other students in the class. You may work out solutions together on whiteboards or other media, but you are not allowed to take away any written notes, diagrams, or code from joint work sessions. Emails, text messages, and other forms of virtual communication also constitute “notes” and should not be used for discussing problems. The issue is that direct recording of other people’s ideas makes it very difficult for you to express the answer independently. People have a tendency to write down what was shared in an undigested form.

You are responsible for everything that you hand in. Written parts of assignments must be completed independently.

3 Debugging

You may not look at or copy anyone else’s code as a guide when writing your own. You may not permit anyone to look at or copy your code for that purpose as well. You are not permitted to work together on debugging, and may not look at someone’s code or work together to modify code for the purpose of helping them debug. In short, no collaboration involving the exchanging of code is allowed.

You may discuss the problems at a high level with other students, but you may not discuss the specifics of your code. We reserve the right to run MOSS (Measure of Software Similarity) if we feel handins are suspiciously similar.

4 Permissions

You must ensure that your course-related files on the CS filesystem have permissions that block other students from viewing them. Ask a consultant or a TA for help with permissions if necessary. Failure to do so can be taken as a violation on your part as it makes it possible for other people to copy your work. Do not post

your code in publicly viewable repositories, such as Github. Doing so is a clear violation of Brown's academic code that could result in punishments such as receiving an NC for the entire course, even in retrospect.

5 Ed Discussion

This course uses Ed Discussion as a collaborative tool for answering questions. In using Ed Discussion, you should be conscientious of the policies previously mentioned while posting questions and providing answers.

Questions may be posted as either private (viewable only by yourself and course staff) or public (additionally viewable by all students for the course registered on Ed Discussion). You may also make your public posts anonymous to other students. Some issues that warrant public questions and responses include: misconceptions or clarifications concerning the assignment, conceptual questions, errors in course assignments or documentation, etc. Examples of problems that would be better addressed with private posts include: debugging questions that include extensive amounts of code, questions that reveal a significant portion of your solution, etc.

We want Ed Discussion to be a collaborative, helpful space. We encourage you to default to posting publicly. If a question contains too much of a homework solution, then the teaching team will simply change the post to private. Likewise, for student-provided answers, we encourage you to provide courteous help and clarifications, without giving word-for-word solutions to homework. If a student-provided answer contains too much of a homework solution, then the teaching team will simply edit the post as necessary.

6 Collaborative Hours

Some TA hours are designated as collaborative ("collab") hours. The collaboration policy is modified as follows for students who are physically present at collab hours hosted by a TA:

- You are allowed to get someone to look at your code on your screen.
- Only you are allowed to fix your own code (i.e. someone else can't type into your file).
- You aren't allowed to share any of your GitHub repositories with another student.
- You aren't allowed to let someone copy your code, or copy someone else's code.
- TAs cannot look at your code.

Because of the collaborative nature, there are no virtual options for collab hours. There also won't be an **hours.cs.brown.edu** queue. Please check the course calendar for the hours' time and physical location! We hope this format will allow us to help more of you at once by giving broad, conceptual guides rather than 1:1 debugging help, and also let you learn more from/by helping others find bugs in their code.