

**Cheating in Political Science:
A Systematic Look at the Academic Misconduct Evidence from Concordia University**

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Introduction

Cheating in political science may be something that we occasionally grumble about with our colleagues in the hallways of our departments, but it is rarely something that we talk about on an academic panel at the Canadian Political Science Association meetings. Also, it is not something that we frequently attempt to investigate using empirical evidence that has been coded and compiled from past academic misconduct files. This may have something to do with the off-putting nature of the subject matter or the unpleasant business of academic code administration. But a more likely combination of deterring factors may be that such data are typically not readily available for analysis. And most universities probably see no immediate benefit in airing their dirty laundry. Consequently, there is a real potential for problem avoidance as well as an over-reliance on unsubstantiated intuition (Ariely, 2009), which at best may or may not lead to the implementation of ineffective policy decisions. All of this is really quite puzzling given that it is the integrity of the university degree that is at stake (Gulli, 2007 and Gulli, Kohler, and Patriquin, 2007).

In the summer of 2011, in the Faculty of Arts and Science at Concordia University in Montreal, we began the cumbersome task of digging through our archived academic misconduct files. We essentially had three main goals in mind. The first was to learn more about students in university who cheat. The second was to hopefully come up with some evidence-based recommendations to help curb cheating in the future. The third was to assess

the potential for a new line of research, based not on people's perceptions of cheating, but on actual cheaters themselves.

Like many universities, our archives house several years' worth of academic misconduct files containing a rich and diverse collection of information. One year into this endeavour, we have made some significant progress, but we are only really starting to scratch the surface. As yet, we have much more data to compile and examine before we can begin drawing confident conclusions and boldly recommending any course of action. Still, up to this point, we have managed to identify and code hundreds of different variables and develop a dataset that contains over two years worth of cases.

In this paper we aim to share some of the preliminary findings from our ongoing exploration. Our focus in this investigation is on political science students, but our research design is comparative, in that we contrast our findings for political science students against those from other departments in the Social Sciences and other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science, such as the Humanities and Sciences. Moreover, in this paper we have three main objectives. The first is to examine the scope of the problem. How grave and widespread is academic misconduct in the Faculty of Arts and Science at Concordia University? And how does the frequency of cheating in political science compare with cheating in other departments and sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science?

Second, what do these data teach us about the nature of the problem? What are the most common types of academic misconduct cases that get filed and how does political science compare in this respect to other departments and sectors in Arts and Science? Moreover, what

proportion of alleged code violators admit to having cheated and what proportion of cases actually end up being charged?

Third, what does this evidence tell us about potential explanations? Why do students cheat? Do political science students cheat for different reasons than other Arts and Science students? Also, to what extent is cheating determined by who is doing the catching? And do cheaters have a particular academic and demographic profile?

Lastly, in the conclusion, we have two main goals. The first is to attempt to make sense of what we have learned from this analysis. The second is to identify where we intend to go in the next phase of this project. It is important to stress once again that our intention at this stage is simply to report the progress that we have made to date and to flag any major patterns and potential points of interest that we plan to continue tracking and investigating in more detail in the future. We have not yet looked at enough data to draw any final conclusions. Nor have we conducted any of the rigorous analysis that we hope to complete once we have compiled a sufficient number of cases.

Some background on our project

We begin with a brief overview of where we began and how far we have come. In August 2011, we launched Phase I of our current and ongoing investigation into academic misconduct in the Faculty of Arts and Science at Concordia University. To be clear, there was no crisis, just a burst of intellectual curiosity. The preliminary funding for this project was generously made available by the Dean of Arts and Science. At the time, the Dean imposed no overt restrictions on what we could do with these data, but there was a clear expectation that

we would eventually provide him with a report on our results. We used this funding largely to code and compile data from academic misconduct files that were processed in 2010-2011. In total this represented about 200 cases. Based on these data, we documented some very preliminary results for our university administration in a report entitled: *Digging for Systematic Patterns in Code Data: Some preliminary evidence from the Faculty of Arts and Science, 2010-2011*. (Bolton, Kanji, and Salari, 2011)

During this initial phase, we also conducted some introductory focus groups with various stakeholders – including administrative staff from the Dean’s Office, student advocates from our different advocacy centres, legal representatives from the Tribunals Office and representatives from the Registrar’s and Exam’s Offices. These meetings have provided us with meaningful insights that have been tremendously useful when it comes to filling in gaps and interpreting data. These focus groups have also provided us with some valuable feedback and guidance on our project. To this point, the bulk of the feedback on the relevance and utility of our investigation has been largely positive and there appears to be a significant amount of enthusiasm and support for this research and its anticipated outcomes. Paramount among these is the general hope that this research might help us to bolster academic integrity, reduce misconduct and improve the fairness of our current process for contending with academic misconduct cases. That said however, we would not be entirely honest if we did not confess that there have also been some who have expressed concern that we may be opening up an unwanted can of worms.

As part of Phase I, we also presented some of our preliminary findings at a major international conference on academic integrity – specifically, The 2011 International

Conference on Academic Integrity – which was held from October 14-16 in Toronto, Ontario. This conference gave us an opportunity to share our results with a broader audience of academics, administrators and students from other North American and international universities. This exercise was extremely beneficial in that it allowed us to run some of our initial findings and the puzzles that they may represent by those who deal with similar concerns in other institutions. We believe that it is safe to say that our initiative was well received and that there is a strong interest within the broader academic community in our research results. Not surprisingly, there are many other universities that are grappling with the same issues and concerns as us and there is a tremendous potential through conferences such as these for us to both contribute in a very significant way to this world-wide discussion and to learn from the experiences of others.

Lastly, we have also discovered along the way that there may be a broader societal interest in this research. When media relations at Concordia discovered that we were conducting this exploration, they encouraged us to write an op-ed piece based on our preliminary findings. Almost immediately, a spin off piece based on our initial op-ed was produced for *NOW Magazine*. (Concordia University *Now* News and Events, 2011) Our article was then picked up by *Le Devoir*, which eventually resulted in a radio interview on CBC. (*Le Devoir*, 2011 and Radio-Canada, 2011) This in turn has generated even more interest within the academic community. Our research was also recently flagged by *Academica's Top 10*. (Academica Group, 2011) And more recently, a piece based on our preliminary findings was published in *University Affairs*. (University Affairs, 2012)

Some insights on the literature

The literature on academic integrity is steadily developing, but a great deal of this literature seems heavily contingent on survey research and both students' and staff's self-reported perceptions of cheating. (Ashworth et al., 1997; Canadian Council on Learning, 2010; Gallant, 2008; Grasgreen, 2012; Hughes and McCabe 2006a; Hughes and McCabe 2006b; Jurdi, Hage, and Chow, 2011; McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield, 2001) A common theme in this debate seems to be that the problem of academic misconduct may be getting worse, even "exploding", in universities. (Clark, 2012) Although, there is at the same time the possibility that this interpretation may be at least somewhat influenced by an increase in reporting. Still, this is likely a minor problem given the typical reluctance of staff members to want to deal with academic misconduct cases. What is even more perplexing is that multiple survey results consistently suggest that more than half of university students admit to cheating in some way or another. (Bowers, 1964; Grasgreen, 2012; Jurdi, Hage, and Chow, 2011; McCabe and Treviño, 1993; McCabe and Treviño, 1996; Hughes and McCabe 2006a, and Hughes and McCabe 2006b) And yet data from our preliminary investigations of academic misconduct files suggest that the proportion of students who actually get caught cheating is much lower and that there is a huge and concerning gap that exists between these two subjective and objective measures. (Bolton, Kanji, and Salari, 2011) Moreover, the literature at this stage provides hardly any perspective about cheating levels in separate faculties or departments. Most of what is available currently is based on aggregate level analyses.

In terms of the types of cheating that go on in universities, here the literature has been quite extensive in identifying and listing a wide variety of examples of academic misconduct,

including receiving text messages during exams, cheating on exams, obtaining unauthorized information about exams, getting answers from someone from a previous exam, plagiarism on written work, copying from classmates, unauthorized collaboration, asking for an extension under false pretense, handing in multiple submissions, falsification, fabrication, impersonation and so on. (Canadian Council on Learning, 2010; Clark, 2012; Hughes and McCabe, 2006a; Hughes and McCabe 2006b, and McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield, 2001) But not as much time and effort has been given to better understanding the actual problem and distribution of cheating within a university context. Moreover, at this stage, we know very little about how effectively universities deal with such cases and what proportion of those who get accused of academic conduct actually end-up getting charged.

With respect to why it is that students cheat, most explanatory factors that are examined in the literature are measured using self-perception surveys, interviews, and attitude scales. (Ashworth et al., 1997; Canadian Council on Learning, 2010; Gallant, 2008; Grasgreen, 2012; Hughes and McCabe, 2006a; Hughes and McCabe, 2006b; Jurdi, Hage, and Chow, 2011; McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield, 2001) This presupposes that faculty and students have the same conceptualization and understanding of cheating and plagiarism, including what is considered serious and not so serious. (Canadian Council on Learning, 2010; Hughes and McCabe 2006a and 2006b) There is therefore an assumption of consensus here that is not necessarily the case. Also, another issue with self-reported behaviour is that we cannot know for sure the actual extent to which students engage in academic misconduct. The reasons for cheating that are given by the students who have agreed to participate in these studies may

therefore not be entirely representative of the student population as a whole, and may not explain all behaviour.

In addition, in the literature, institutional and contextual factors are also suggested to be important influences on student behaviour. (Ashworth et al, 1997; Gulli, Kohler, and Patriquin, 2007; Hughes and McCabe 2006a and 2006b; McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield, 2001, Paterson, Taylor, and Usick, 2003; Ryerson University, 2012, and Wideman, 2008) For example, lower cheating rates are found to be associated with factors such as smaller institutions, honour codes, the implementation of penalties, peer disapproval of cheating, information and the quality of the learning experience, just to name a few. (Ashworth et al., 1997; Gulli, Kohler, and Patriquin, 2007; Hughes and McCabe 2006a and 2006b; McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield, 2001, Paterson, Taylor, and Usick, 2003; Ryerson University, 2012, and Wideman, 2008) This research has helped to develop and advance the understanding that dealing with academic misconduct in universities requires not just recommendations and solutions that are geared toward cheating students but also faculty and staff. As yet however, there does not appear to be a great deal of supporting evidence that speaks directly to this claim.

Lastly, with regards to the question of which types of students are most likely to cheat, the literature is often mixed and inconclusive, although some claims are clearly more consistent than others. Among the most prominent are the understanding that international students, for a variety of reasons having to do with factors such as culture and language, cheat more frequently than other students (see for example Bradshaw and Baluja, 2011; Grasgreen, 2012, and The Globe and Mail, 2012). Also, the literature consistently suggests that students with

lower grades are more likely to cheat than those with higher grade point averages (see for example McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield, 2001). With this analysis, we hope to start contributing to this literature, but from a slightly different vantage point that is based on data from actual academic misconduct files that have been addressed and archived in a post-secondary institution.

Phase II of data compilation and analysis

After having conducted Phase I of our analysis, and after having probed into some of the developing literature on academic integrity, it became even more evident that what we needed most was more data. It was clear that we were on to some potentially useful findings that may add to what we already know about academic integrity and misconduct, but what we really need is more evidence so that we can be more certain about our results. With that in mind, we turned this time to two sources for funding – the Provost’s Office and the Dean of Arts and Science. Both offices contributed generously and with our coffers replenished, we began Phase II of our research. The goal was to add at least one more year’s worth of data from past academic misconduct files to our developing dataset. Currently we have coded nearly 340 variables and compiled approximately 400 cases spanning over three academic years (2009-2012).

This evidence allows us to begin looking more systematically at academic misconduct across different sectors and departments. It also allows us to better understand variation in the types of offences that are committed. And it permits us to investigate differences in the reasons that accused cheaters give for violating the academic code. In addition, these data

allow us to learn more about who is doing the reporting. And they make it possible to learn more about the academic and demographic profiles of actual code offenders.

What we still cannot do at this stage is look in any great detail at the evidence within particular years, departments or sub-groups, because the number of cases is still fairly small. For the same reason, it is also difficult to conduct any rigorous analyses, as we do not yet have enough cases to be confident of our results. For academic year 2009-2010, we currently have a total of 179 cases available for analysis and for 2010-2011, we have 207 cases. In terms of political science, so far we have compiled a total of 95 cases. In the Social Sciences, we have 227 cases. And for the Arts and Sciences, we have a total of 370 cases available for investigation.

Findings

The scope of the problem

We turn now to look more closely at the evidence. In order to provide some context, we begin by examining the overall scope of our academic misconduct caseload. Figures 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D report data that are collected and disseminated annually by Concordia's Office of Tribunals. (Office of Student Tribunals, Concordia University, 2007-2008; 2008-2009; 2009-2010; 2010-2011) These findings suggest two basic points. The first is that compared to the student population of the university as a whole (which is currently over 40,000), the total number of academic misconduct cases reported per year is relatively small. Based on these data, it would seem as though less than 1% of our student population ever commits an academic offence. Moreover, the cross-time evidence suggests that this is a relatively stable

finding that stretches back over multiple years (2010-2011:N=408; 2009-2010:N=367; 2008-2009:N=398; 2007-2008:N=349). Clearly, if the survey research on cheating is accurate, this finding lends further support to the suggestion that there is likely a huge gap between the number of university students who claim to have cheated and those who actually get caught.

Also, these data would seem to suggest that certain faculties may be more prone to code violations than others. Certainly the plurality, and often the majority of academic misconduct incidents are reported in the Faculty of Arts and Science (60% in 2010-2011; 51% in 2009-2010; 46% in 2008-2009; 60% in 2007-2008), as opposed to other faculties and schools. At this stage, however, it is difficult to be absolutely certain of this interpretation, as it is still possible that we may have some underreporting and cases of misconduct that go undetected. In other words, we have much more data collection and follow through analysis to conduct before we can be more confident about exactly what these data imply about the extent of cheating that goes on in university and the distribution of such cases across different faculties and schools. For now, however, this is what the evidence seems to suggest based on data that we currently have.

Figures 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D about here

When we unpack the evidence that we have for the Faculty of Arts and Science, the data suggest that cheating is detected and reported more frequently in some sectors than others. Figure 2 shows that in both 2009-2010 (58%) and 2010-2011 (54%), the majority of academic misconduct cases were filed in the Social Sciences, as opposed to the Humanities and Sciences. That said however, there is evidence to suggest that there has been some movement within these latter two sectors. For instance, from 2009 to 2011, the proportion of academic

misconduct cases filed in the Humanities has increased by 10% (from 14% in 2009-2010 to 24% in 2010-2011). Conversely, in the Sciences, the evidence suggests that the proportion of academic misconduct cases reported has declined by 7% (from 20% in 2009-2010 to 13% in 2010-2011).

Figure 2 about here

Figure 3 looks more closely at the proportion of academic misconduct cases reported within the Social Sciences. Once again, we find a similar pattern. Recall that the evidence presented above suggests that most of the academic misconduct incidents reported at Concordia University between 2009 and 2011 come from the Faculty of Arts and Science and specifically from the Social Sciences sector. This suggests that the breadth of our problem with academic dishonesty may be largely contained in one faculty and one sector. What the data in Figure 3 do is build on this interpretation by suggesting that a large share of the academic misconduct cases that get filed in the Social Sciences come primarily from one department – political science (42% in 2009-2010 and 39% in 2010-2011). This finding appears stable over time and it suggests that cheating in political science may be a major problem.

Figure 3 about here

This is not to suggest however, that cheating in other departments is inconsequential. On the contrary, the evidence in Figure 3 indicates that nearly 40% of the academic misconduct cases reported in the Social Sciences come from departments such as Geography, Planning and Environment (3% in 2009-2010 and 18% in 2010-2011) and Religion (20% in 2009-2010 and 18% in 2010-2011). And in the case of the former, the data indicate that the number of misconduct cases reported has increased sharply by 15% over just one year. That said, however, these data

clearly suggest that cheating in political science may be a core part of the overall academic misconduct problem in the Social Sciences and by implication in the Faculty of Arts and Science and the university as a whole.

The nature of the problem

Having identified where a significant share of academic misconduct cases appear to be coming from, we turn now to examine the evidence pertaining to the nature of the problem. Here our analysis begins with the data reported in Figure 4. Not so surprisingly, the evidence in this case suggests that the large majority of incident reports filed in both political science (85%) and other departments in the Social Sciences (85%) more generally are non-exam related. This is different from other sectors in the Arts and Sciences, such as the Humanities and the Sciences, where one out of three incident reports filed (36%) are exam-related. In all, our data suggest that 62% of the academic misconduct cases reported in the Humanities and Sciences are non-exam related, which is 23% lower than the proportion of non-exam related reports that are filed in Political Science and other departments in the Social Sciences.

Figure 4 about here

In Figure 5 we look more closely at the actual allegations. In political science, the bulk of the evidence clearly favours one type of allegation over the others. A large majority of the incident reports that are filed in political science have to do with plagiarism (85%). No other non-exam related allegations really factor as being relevant. This is a consistent finding in both 2009-2010 (84%) and 2010-2011 (86%). In both other departments in the Social Sciences and

other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science, the findings are not as one-sided or as consistent.

Figure 5 about here

In other departments in the Social Sciences, about 2 in every three students (63%) are alleged to have plagiarized. However, the cross-time findings suggest that there has been an increase in the proportion of plagiarism cases of about 10% from 2009-2010 (58% in 2009-2010 and 67% in 2010-2011). In addition, about 15% of the non-exam related offences reported in other departments in the Social Sciences relate to unauthorized collaboration, which the cross-time findings also suggest has increased by 6% from 2009-2010 (11% in 2009-2010 to 17% in 2010-2011).

In the Humanities and Sciences, which are the two sectors represented in our Faculty of Arts and Science category, the proportion of plagiarism allegations is 49%. However, the cross-time findings suggest that this type of allegation has increased substantially by nearly 30% within the span of one year (from 35% in 2009-2010 to 63% in 2010-2011). Even in the Humanities and Sciences, virtually 2 in every three incident reports that now get filed have to do with plagiarism. In addition, about 20% of other non-exam related incident reports that get filed in the Humanities and Sciences have to do with allegations such as unauthorized collaboration (16%) and contributing to other people's dishonest behaviour (3%). Note however, that the cross-time evidence suggests that the proportion of these other non-exam related incidents has declined notably since 2009 (from 27% in 2009-2010 to 6% in 2010-2011 and from 8% in 2009-2010 to 0% in 2010-2011, respectively).

Figure 6 about here

Note also that cheaters in political science differ slightly from cheaters in other departments in the Social Sciences and other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science when it comes to facing the music. The findings in Figure 6 indicate that the large majority of students who get accused of academic misconduct in the Faculty of Arts and Science typically end up admitting to the charge. But political science students (87%) are about 10% more likely to admit to the charge than students who are accused of academic misconduct in other departments in the Social Sciences (78%) and in other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science (78%).

Figure 7 about here

Political science students are also more likely to be charged than students in other departments in the Social Sciences (by 4%) and in other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science (by 7%). The data reported in Figure 7 indicate that 91% of political science students who are alleged to have violated the academic code of conduct end up being charged. By comparison, 87% of students in other departments in the Social Sciences who are accused end up being charged. And 84% of students who are accused of cheating in other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science end up being charged.

What accounts for the problem?

In attempting to determine what might account for the problem of cheating, we turn first to examine what code offenders themselves provide as the reason for having committed their academic misconduct. The results in Table 1 indicate that the range of excuses provided by students is fairly broad and that students in different departments and sectors of the faculty

place varying emphasis on the reasons for having committed their academic misconduct. Note for instance that among political science students, the most prominent reason provided was “a lack of time” (30%). Students in other departments in the Social Sciences (30%) and in other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science (25%), however, most frequently indicated that their code misconduct was that it was a “careless mistake”.

Table 1 about here

That said, these data also indicate a number of commonalities. For all three groups of students, ignorance was the second most common excuse. On average, about 18% of all students examined said that they “did not know” that what they were doing was an academic misconduct. Another relatively common finding is that difficult personal circumstances and evaluative exercises are often the least likely to be blamed, meaning that they are typically at the bottom of the list of excuses provided. The only real exception are students in the Humanities and Sciences, for whom difficult personal circumstances constitute the third most common excuse (15%).

Figure 8 about here

Next we turn to look more closely at those who are doing the incident report filing to see if there are any notable institutional or contextual differences that might be useful in helping to explain what accounts for variation in the proportion of academic misconduct reports that get filed across different departments and sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science. The findings reported in Figure 8 are quite striking in that they suggest that no more than a handful of multiple filers (academic staff who file multiple academic misconduct reports per year) account for a very large portion of the incident reports that are filed in political

science and in other departments in the Social Sciences. Multiple filers are also present in the Humanities and Sciences, but this effect is not nearly as significant in magnitude. More specifically, the evidence indicates that 52% of the incident reports in political science are filed by people who file multiple reports. In other departments in the Social Sciences, 43% of incident reports are filed by multiple filers. And in the Humanities and Sciences, only 23% of incident reports are filed by multiple filers.

Table 2 about here

Lastly, we turn to examine the academic and demographic profiles of code violators to determine if there are any consistent patterns that might help us better understand why university students cheat. What we find mostly is a diversity of profiles, as well as evidence that is not always consistent with the literature. For example, the results in Table 2 indicate that a slim majority of students who cheat in political science (53%) do so in their 300 and 400 level courses, whereas in other departments in the social sciences (56%) and in other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science (51%), more than half of the cheating detected occurs at the 200 level. In the case of the term in which the violation takes place and the status of the student at the time of the infraction, the evidence indicates that there are hardly any differences to note. Most students who violate the academic code of conduct are full-time students, registered in either the Fall or Winter semesters.

The only minor distinctions in this case are that political science students are somewhat more likely to cheat in the Fall (51%) as opposed to the Winter semester (43%), whereas students in other departments in the Social Sciences and in the Humanities and Sciences are slightly more likely to cheat in the Winter term (50% and 54% respectively) than in the Fall term

(40% and 42% respectively). Also, cheaters in political science are slightly more likely to be full time students than cheaters in other departments in the Social Sciences and in the Humanities and Sciences, who tend to be slightly more inclined to be part time students.

In terms of credits completed at the time of offence, the findings are fairly consistent and evenly split. Slightly more than half of all cheaters in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (an average of 53%) commit their code infraction after they have completed 30 credits and slightly less than half (an average of 45%) commit their code violation before they have completed 30 credits. Furthermore, with respect to grade point average, the findings reported in Table 2 are quite striking. The majority of findings suggest that most cheaters have a cumulative grade point average of 3 or more, which at Concordia stands for a letter grade of B or higher. This is not to deny however, that there is also a significant proportion of cheaters who have low grades. Moreover these results are most evenly split in the case of departments in the Social Sciences other than political science.

Table 3 about here

Lastly, when it comes to demographic profile, the findings reported in Table 3 indicate that males (53%) are slightly more likely to cheat in political science than females (46%). In other departments in the Social Sciences and in other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science the opposite is true and the gender differences are much greater. Females in other departments in the Social Sciences (60%) are 21% more likely to cheat than males (39%). And females in the Humanities and Sciences (58%) are 16% more likely to cheat than males (42%).

In terms of age differences, the findings are relatively similar. Three out of four cheaters throughout the Faculty of Arts and Science tend to be 25 or younger, which is what we would

expect when the population being analyzed is undergraduates in university. If there is one minor difference that stands out here it is that cheaters in political science are somewhat more likely to be under 20 than other cheaters in the faculty. With regards to residential status, the findings are consistent, but counter to what the literature suggests. Most cheaters in the Faculty of Arts and Science tend to be Canadian citizens. Still, there are significant proportions of international students and permanent residents who also cheat (an average of 27%). And the proportion of international students and permanent residents who cheat in political science and in the Humanities and Sciences is slightly higher (by an average of 8%) than the proportion of international students and permanent residents who cheat in other departments in the Social Sciences.

Conclusion

Cheating in political science is not something that we frequently see being analyzed systematically using data that have been coded and compiled from archived academic misconduct files. And the evidence from this investigation suggests that we may still be miles, if not light years away from catching everyone who claims to cheat on opinion surveys. Still the findings from this preliminary investigation bring to bear a number of interesting points. The first is that cheating in political science may constitute a fairly major problem relative to cheating in other departments in the Social Sciences and in other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science, such as the Humanities and Sciences. The second is that the bulk of this problem in political science consistently has to do with plagiarism, whereas in other departments in the Social Sciences and in the Humanities and the Sciences, the type of cheating tends to be more

diverse. In other departments in the Social Sciences for instance, a considerable proportion of reported allegations relate also to the problem of unauthorized collaboration. Also in the Humanities and Sciences, we find a significant number of cases relating to both unauthorized collaboration and exam-related offences. That said however, in both other departments in the Social Sciences and other sectors in the Faculty of Arts and Science, the cross-time findings suggest that plagiarism is on the rise. Moreover, our evidence also shows that once they are caught very few cheaters in the Faculty of Arts and Science deny their alleged offence or have their charge dismissed. However, cheaters in political science are the most likely to both admit to their alleged offence and to get charged.

In terms of what accounts for this problem, the findings are more often diverse than consistent, which suggests to us that cheating in university is not likely a simplistic problem with a one-shot solution. For example, cheaters give a variety of reasons for cheating and those reasons are not always consistent across departments and sectors. In political science the major reason that code violators give for having committed their misconduct is a “lack of time”. Other cheaters in the Faculty of Arts and Science tend most often to blame their academic offence on a “careless mistake”. Exactly which situation to tackle first is likely to depend on the question of what is the biggest problem? And this is where research such as this can be extremely useful.

That said, there are also some instances where we find some generalizable consistencies. For instance, the second most prominent excuse given by all cheaters in the Faculty of Arts and Science is that they “did not know” that what they were doing was an academic offence. And very few cheaters in the Faculty of Arts and Science tend to blame their

academic misconduct on either personal circumstances or a difficulty in understanding. Insights such as these may be valuable when designing more broad-based counter-strategies. Furthermore, our findings indicate that institutions and context may also be key. More specifically, our evidence shows that no more than a handful of multiple filers account for a great share of the incident reports submitted in political science and in other departments in the Social Sciences than in the Humanities and Sciences. This suggests that we may need to bring more resources and effort to the table if we are to catch more cheaters.

Also in terms of academic and demographic profiles, the evidence seems to suggest that there is no one consistent background that pertains to all cheaters. Even cheaters within a particular discipline come from a variety of different academic and demographic profiles. What is more interesting however are findings that challenge conventional wisdoms by suggesting that cheaters are more often Canadian citizens than international students or permanent residents and that they tend most often to be good students.

During the next phase of this project, we plan to move this investigation forward in two main ways, depending of course on how successful we are in gathering the additional funding that is required. The first objective will be to continue coding and entering data from additional years (specifically, 2008-2009 and 2007-2008) so that we can be more confident about the generalizability of our results and conduct more detailed analyses. The second objective will be to collect some data from other faculties so that we can start to explore beyond the Faculty of Arts and Science.

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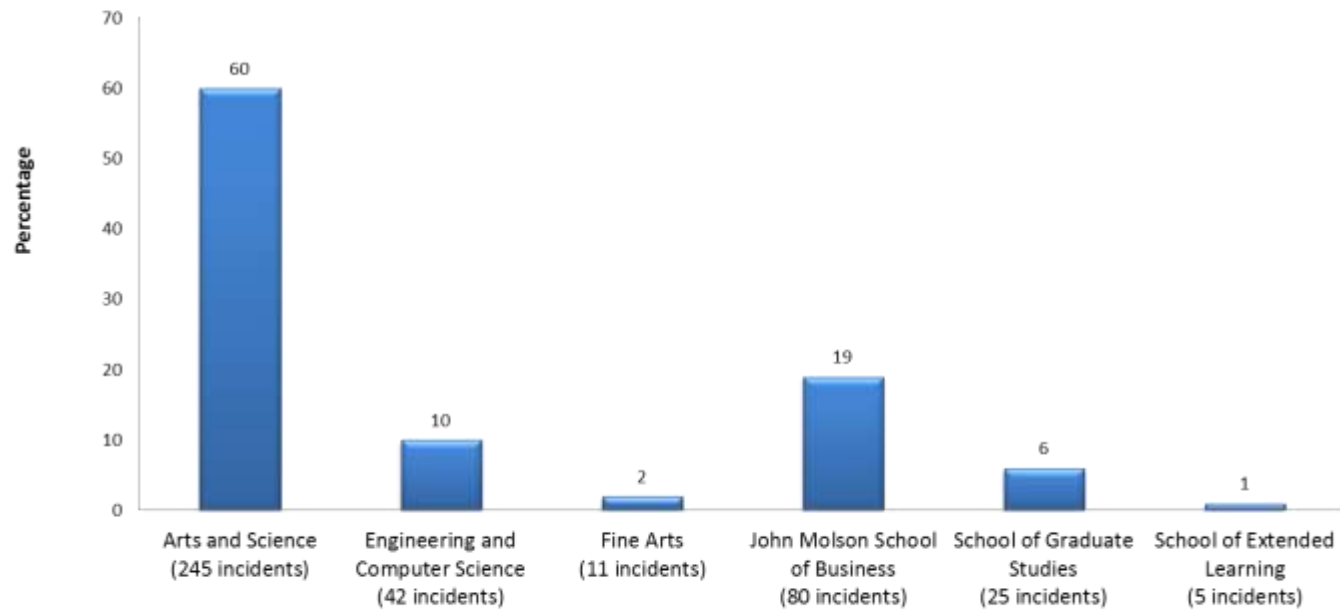
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Figures and Tables

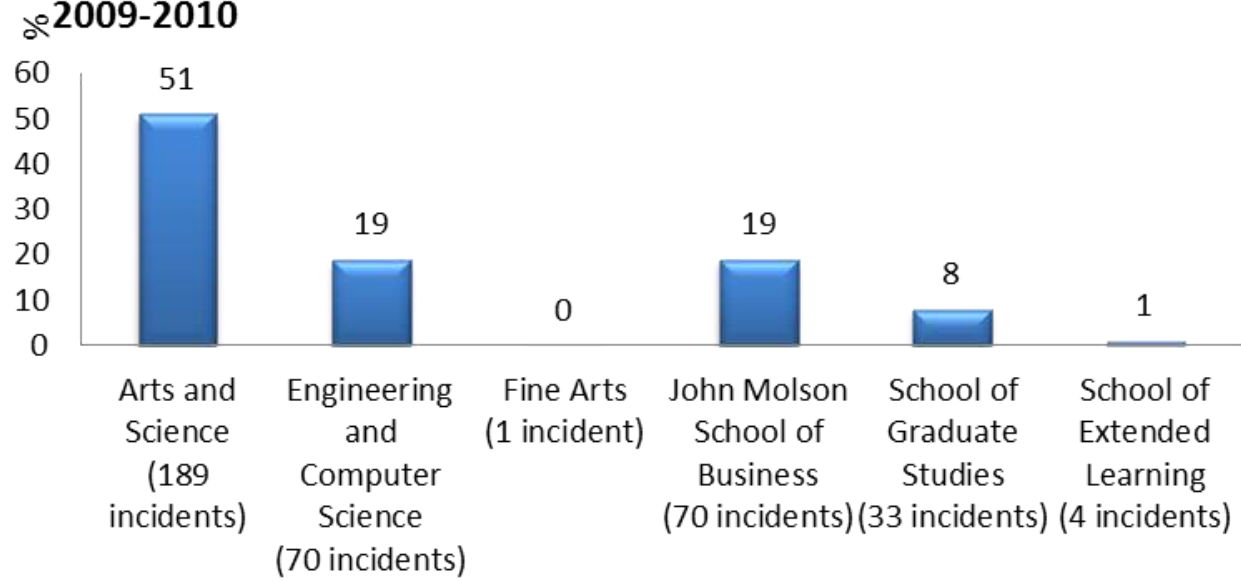
Figure 1A:
Faculty where academic misconduct incidents were reported, 2010-2011



Note: n= 408 incidents

Source: Office of Student Tribunals, Concordia

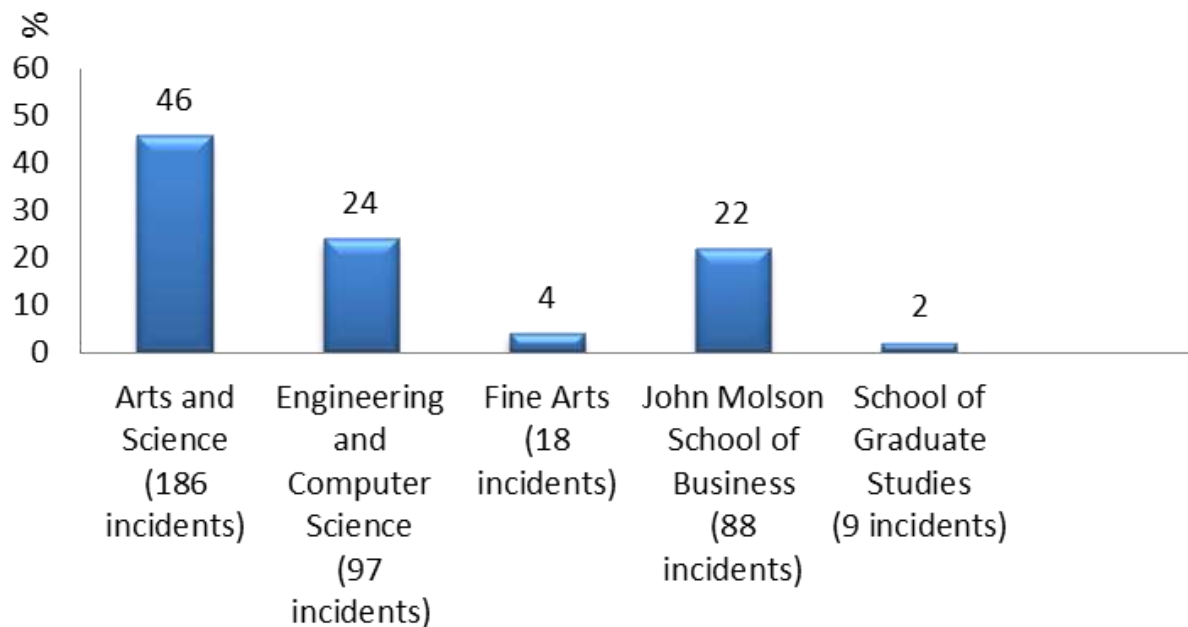
Figure 1B:
Faculty where academic misconduct incidents were reported,
2009-2010



Note: n = 367 incidents

Source: Office of Student Tribunals, Concordia

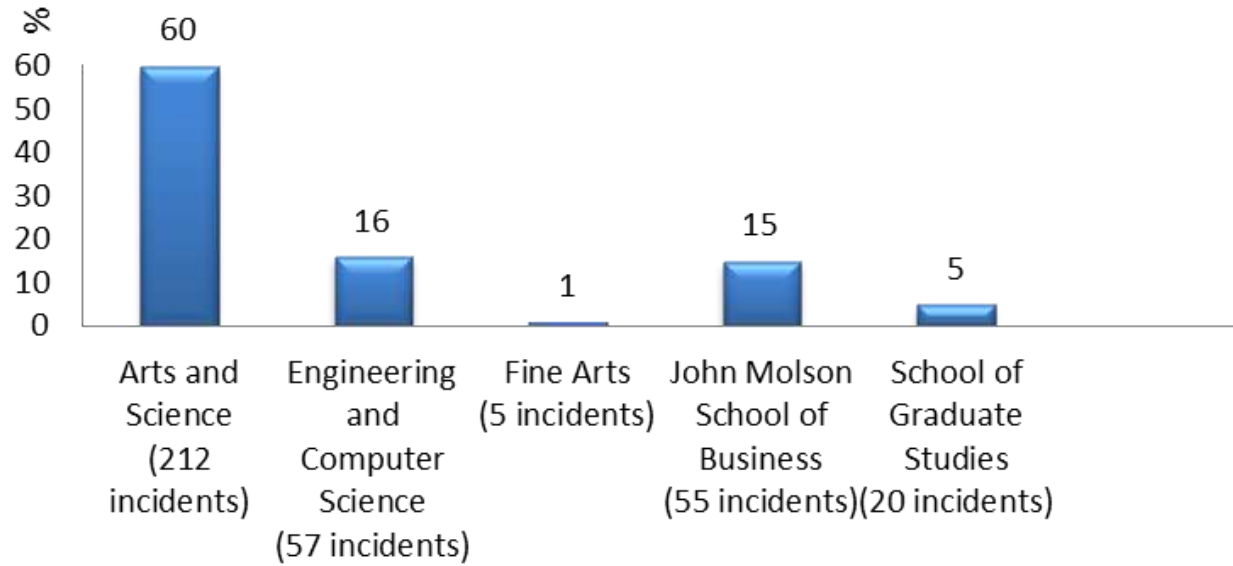
**Figure 1C:
Faculty where academic misconduct incidents were reported,
2008-2009**



Note: n = 398 incidents

Source: Office of Student Tribunals, Concordia

**Figure 1D:
Faculty where academic misconduct incidents were reported, 2007-2008**

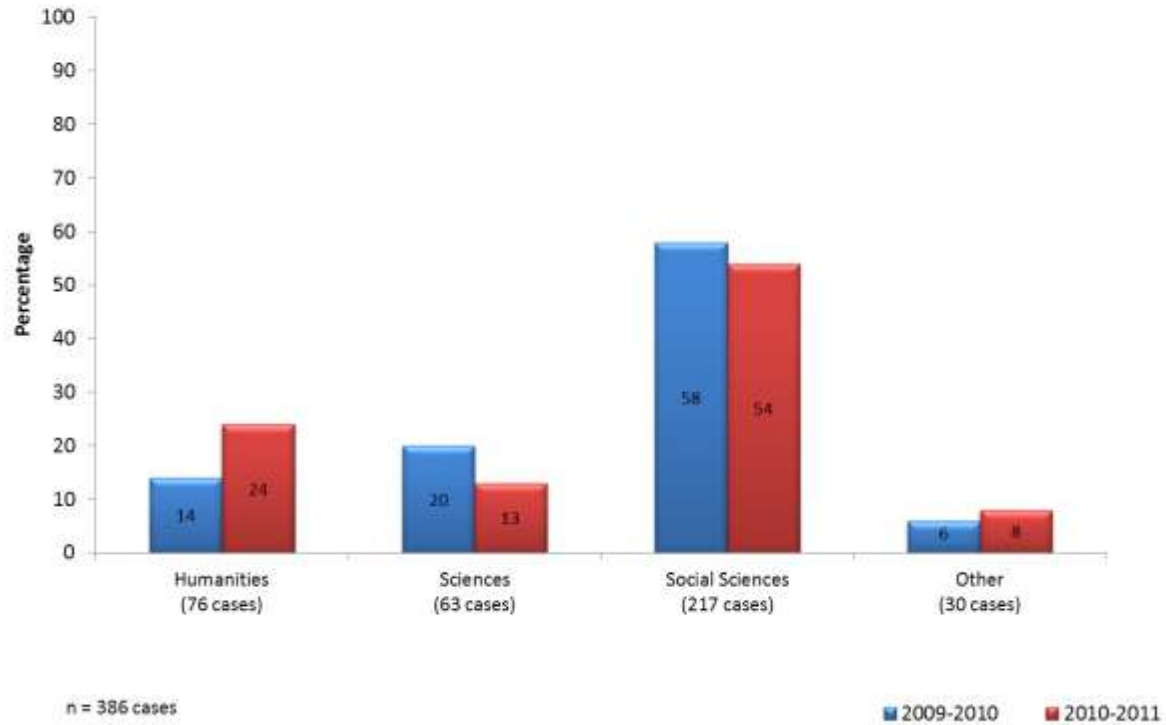


Note: n = 349 incidents

Source: Office of Student Tribunals, Concordia

Figure 2

**Incidents Processed in Arts and Science
2009-2011**

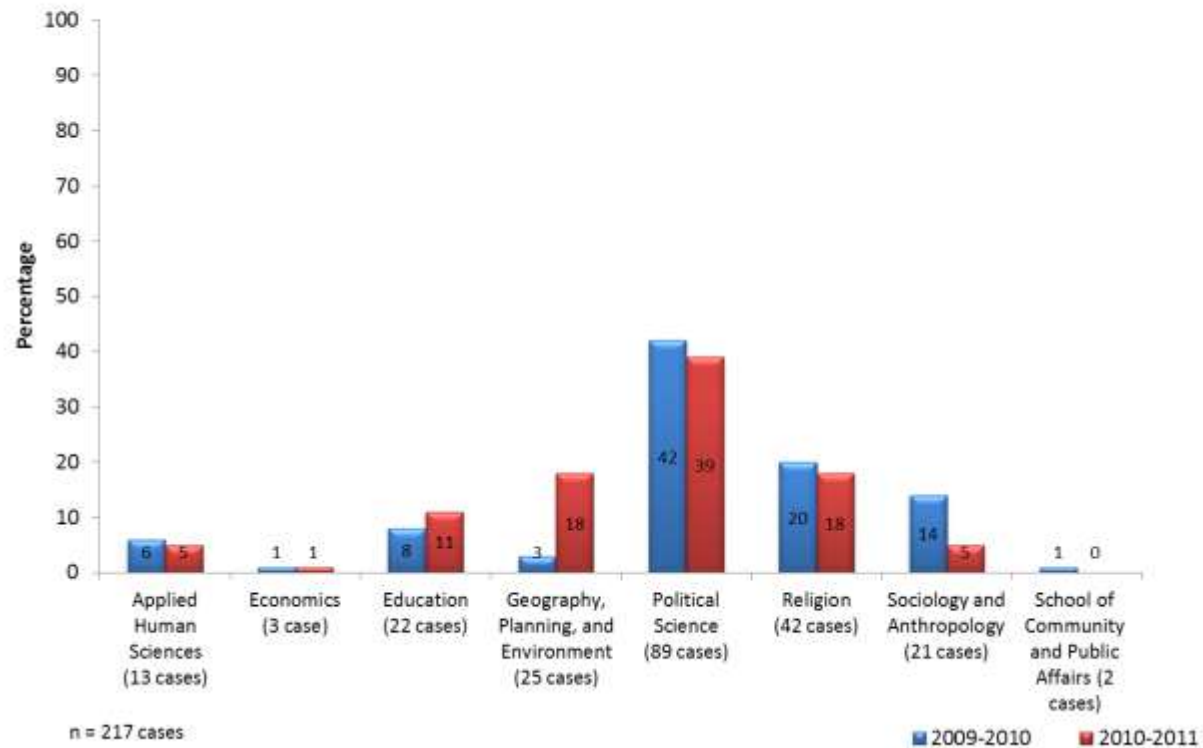


Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2011

Figure 3:

**Departments Where Incidents Were Reported in the Social Sciences
2009-2011**

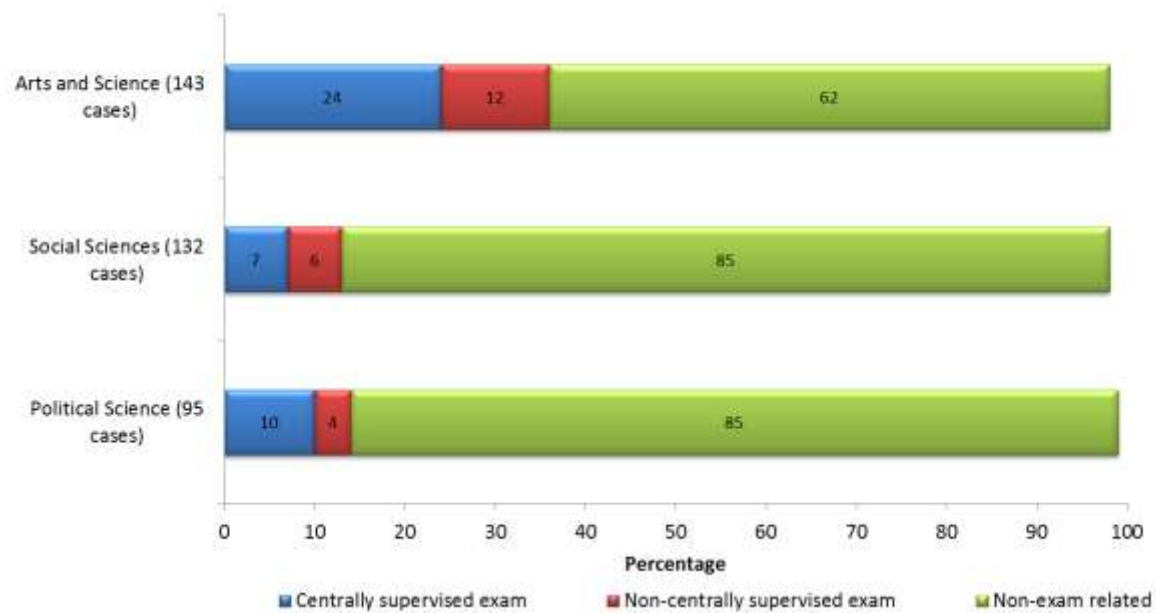


Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2011

Figure 4:

Type of Incident Report 2009-2012



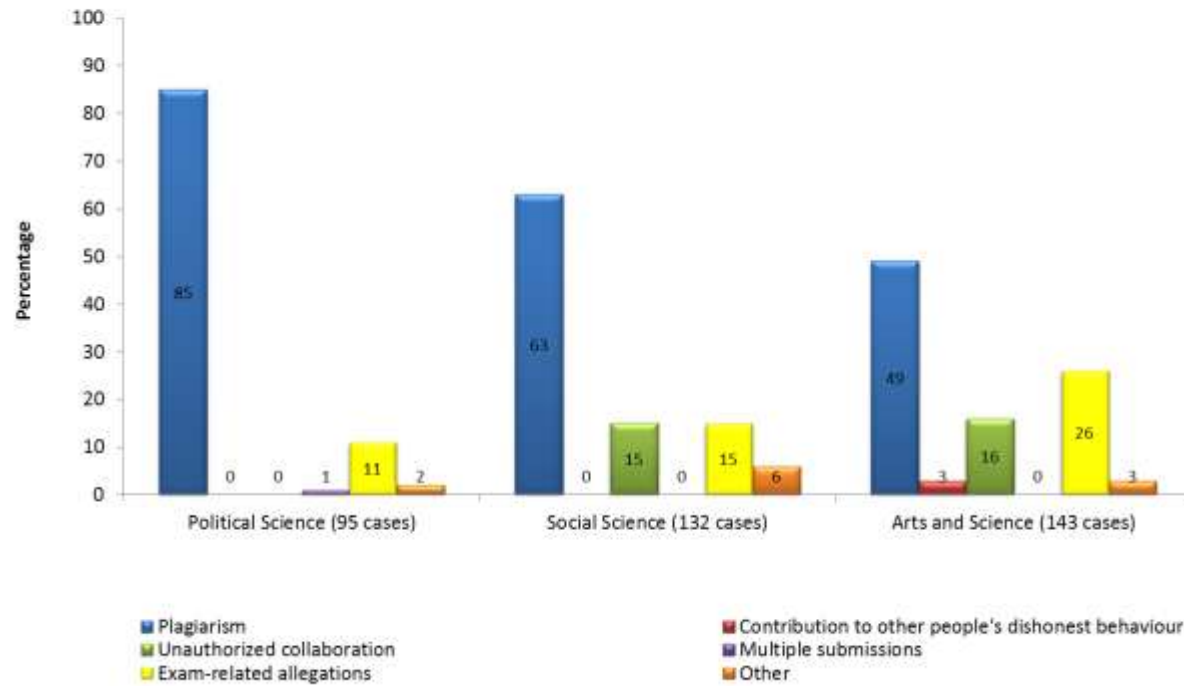
n = 370 cases

Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2012

Figure 5:

Type of Allegations 2009-2012



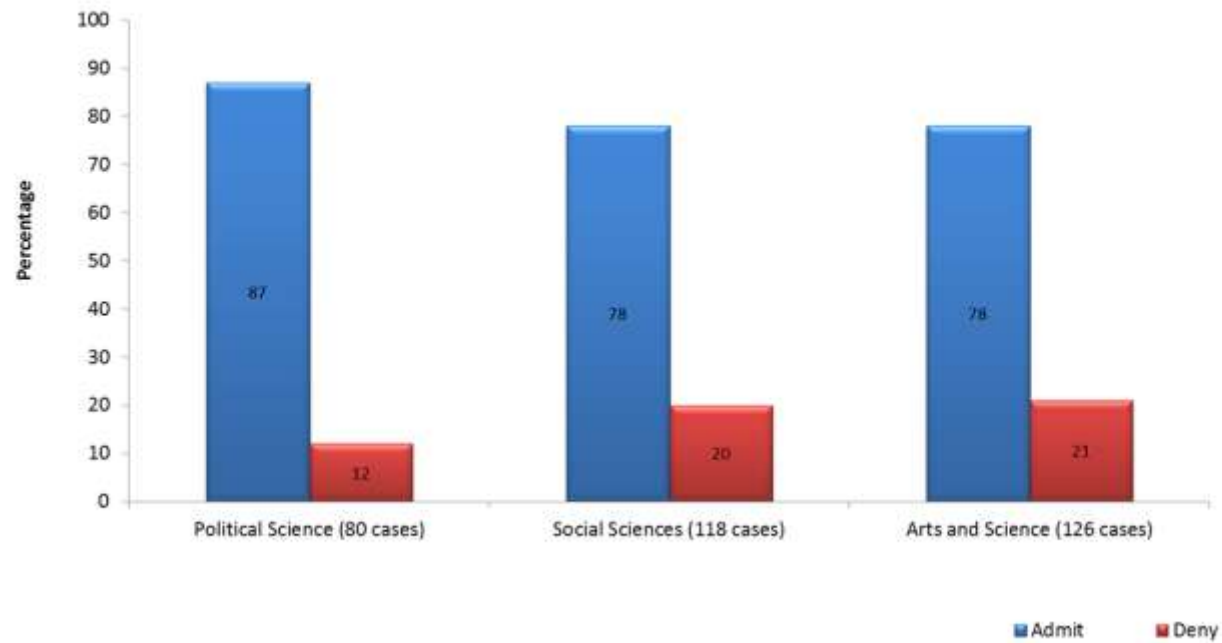
n = 370 cases

Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2012

Figure 6:

Proportion who Admit or Deny the charge, 2009-2012



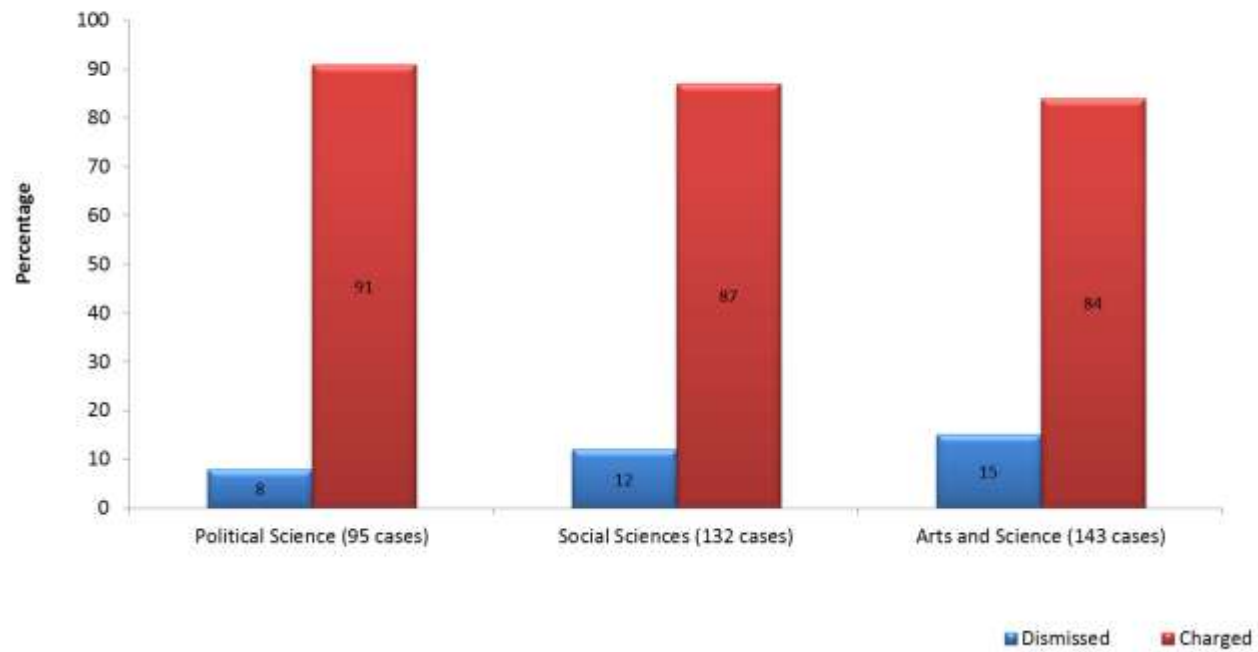
n = 324 cases

Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2012

Figure 7:

Proportion who are Charged or Dismissed 2009-2012



n = 370 cases

Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2012

Table 1: Reasons given for academic misconduct 2009-2012

Political Science (62 cases)	Social Sciences (85 cases)	Arts and Science (90 cases)
1.Lack of time (30%)	1.Careless mistake (30%)	1.Careless mistake (25%)
2.Did not know (19%)	2.Did not know (18%)	2.Don't know (17%)
2.Careless mistake (19%)	3. Lack of time (17%)	3.Difficult personal circumstances (15%)
3.Personal circumstances (16%)	4.Difficult task (12%	3.Other (15%)
4.Difficult task (9%)	5.Difficult personal circumstance (10%)	4.Lack of time (13%)
5.Other (4%)	6.Other (9%)	5.Difficulty of task (12%)

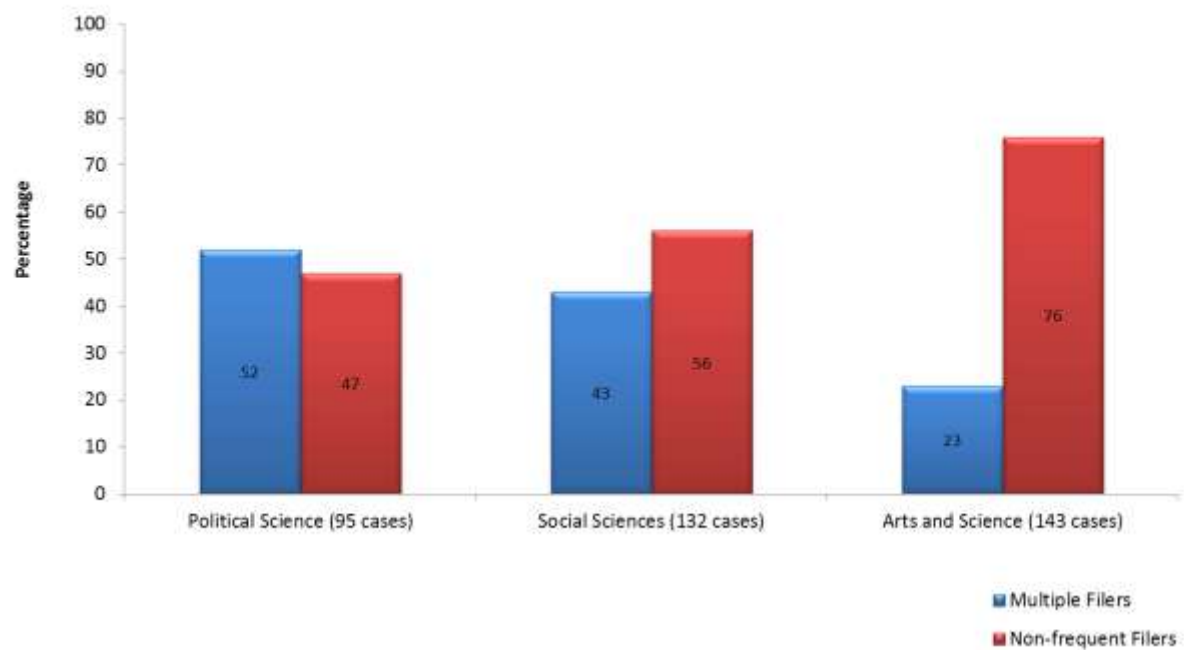
n = 237 cases

Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2012

Figure 8:

Proportion of Multiple and Non-Frequent Filers, 2009-2012



n = 370 cases

Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2012

Table 2: Academic Profile 2009-2012

	Course level			Term			Time status	
	200 level	300 level	400 level	Summer	Fall	Winter	Part-time	Full-time
Political Science (95 cases)	46%	30%	23%	5%	51%	43%	4%	95%
Social Sciences (132 cases)	56%	28%	15%	9%	40%	50%	11%	88%
Arts and Science (143 cases)	51%	38%	10%	2%	42%	54%	11%	88%

	Credits completed at time of offense			Cumulative Grade Point Average at time of offense		
	0-30	31-60	>60	<2	2-2.99	3 and beyond
Political Science (95 cases)	43%	22%	34%	15%	24%	60%
Social Science (132 cases)	45%	25%	28%	15%	34%	50%
Arts and Science (143 cases)	47%	21%	30%	18%	22%	59%

n = 370 cases

Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2012

Table 3: Demographic Profile 2009-2012

	Gender		Age			Residence			
	Male	Female	< 20	20-25	>26	CN citizen	Int'l student	Perm. Res.	First Nations
Political Science (95 cases)	53%	46%	18%	56%	24%	67%	16%	15%	0%
Social Science (132 cases)	39%	60%	6%	73%	20%	75%	12%	10%	1%
Arts and Science (143 cases)	42%	58%	10%	66%	23%	68%	14%	15%	1%

n = 370 cases

Source: Concordia University Academic Misconduct

Dataset, 2009-2012