

Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct – A Guide

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: A GUIDE

1 *Introduction*

- 1.1 On your university course you encounter a huge variety of texts, ideas, theories and creative works, and you will draw on many of these when producing your own assessed work. The effective use of sources is an essential part of the learning process. In your assessed work it helps to demonstrate your grasp of the subject and of the major issues and debates within it. It shows that you can understand, analyse and compare different materials, and that you are aware of how your own ideas and arguments have been shaped by other people's work.
- 1.2 Your grades should demonstrate how effectively you have developed these skills and capabilities. In order to assess this the person marking your assignment must be able to see that you are aware of the distinction between your own work and the sources you have used. Learning how to indicate clearly where and how you have used someone else's work is good academic practice and an essential skill for future employment. Students who copy other people's work may fail to develop their abilities and knowledge to an appropriate level.
- 1.3 Claiming credit for someone else's words or ideas, or using them to gain credit for yourself, is considered dishonest both in the academic world and in other settings. Because it is essential that students are graded on the basis of what they have achieved themselves, dishonesty or 'academic misconduct' are subject to penalties. In all of the work which you submit at university you must use an established method of **referencing** to indicate where you have used words, ideas, concepts or other materials which were originally produced by someone else. Full guidance on **referencing, quoting and paraphrasing** is provided in the publication *Cite Them Right*, which is available online here.
<http://library.sunderland.ac.uk/find-resources/referencing/>
- 1.4 This document provides some guidance on what constitutes 'academic misconduct', on how to avoid it, and on what to do if you are suspected of academic misconduct. The processes are formally defined in the University's Academic Misconduct Regulations, which are definitive. This document is intended as guidance, and does not replace or supersede those Regulations.

2 **What is academic misconduct?**

2.1 Academic misconduct includes all of the following.

2.2 **Plagiarism.** The University regulations define this as ‘the unacknowledged insertion into a student’s work of material taken from the work, published or unpublished, of another person’. It involves representing or ‘passing off’ someone else’s work as if it is your own. Even if you do this without intending to, it is still classed as plagiarism. Examples include:

- incorporating a portion of text, an image, statistics or any other material which someone else has produced (e.g. in a book, an article, a journal, a video, a website) into your work, *without* reference (and, if appropriate, quotation marks) to indicate the source.
- copying and pasting any text or images from anywhere on the internet or another electronic source into your work, *without* a reference (and, if appropriate, quotation marks) to indicate the source.
- paraphrasing or summarising someone else’s work (expressing their idea in your own words) without acknowledging the source of these ideas and arguments.
- copying from another student’s work, electronically or by any other method.

You should check your programme handbook for any further information about plagiarism which is specific to your subject of study.

2.3 **Collusion.** This occurs when more than one student contributes to a piece of work which is then submitted and passed off by an individual student (or by more than one student, each submitting the work as if they had done it on their own). Sometimes at university you will be required to work collaboratively with other students, preparing and submitting assignments together, and in this case ‘joint work’ is entirely appropriate. However, when only one student will receive credit for an assignment, all of the work for it should be done by that student. Allowing another student to copy all or part of your assignment is also collusion.

Making your work available for someone else to use can be considered collusion. You should think very carefully about whether you wish to risk devaluing your own qualification by making your work available in a way that might facilitate academic misconduct by others, for example, by putting your assessment on a website for others to download.

2.4 **Submitting work which someone else has produced.** You must not ask anyone else to do a piece of work for you, or submit a piece of work which you have not produced yourself. Students must not ask someone else to do an assignment for them, nor buy or borrow a piece of work ‘ready made’ from any source.

2.5 **Cheating.** You must not disobey the rules set for the conduct of examinations or time-constrained assessments. Examples of cheating include copying the work of others, referring to notes which are not permitted in the exam room, communicating with others, either inside or outside the exam room, or using electronic devices such as mobile phones to bring in or look up information that you are not permitted to have.

3 ***What should I do to avoid plagiarism?***

3.1 Of course, you must not deliberately engage in any of the behaviours described in Section 2. In addition, you should:

- make sure that you **understand the referencing conventions** which are used in your subject area. Get a copy of *Cite Them Right*, and ask your tutors for additional information about correct practice for your course.
- make sure that you **understand any additional information on plagiarism** given in your programme handbook.
- **read the University regulations** on academic misconduct.
- **if you aren't sure** about how to use references, or have any anxieties over academic misconduct, **ask** one of your lecturers for guidance. This might be the person who has set the assignment, the module leader, and/or your personal tutor.

3.2 You should also develop ways of working which make it easy to avoid plagiarism, e.g.:

- **Get into the habit of referencing properly** as soon as you start preparing your assignments. When taking notes, write down all the details of every source you use, applying the conventions fully. Make sure that your notes show clearly whether you have paraphrased or copied directly from the original. If you sometimes include your own views or arguments alongside your notes on a source, you must do so in a form which allows you to identify them easily as 'yours'.
For example, you might write or highlight your views or arguments using a different colour pen or a different typeface if you are taking your notes electronically. You might put them in brackets [[like this]], or you might combine brackets with your name or initials, e.g. [[JS – this point is v similar to the one made by Smith (2002), but it goes a lot further into the examples]].
- Similarly, **use proper referencing from the first draft** of any assignment. Place any quoted words in quotation marks, use full references for any material taken from a secondary source, and add every source which you use to your reference list as you work. *Don't* plan to do all the referencing as your last task on the assignment.
- Use **several different sources** in every piece of work and don't rely too heavily on any one source. Make sure that when you quote or paraphrase from a source you think carefully about why you are doing so, and make this clear to your reader.
- **Never construct an assignment by cutting and pasting** from another source.
- Make sure you **leave yourself enough time** to read, consider and incorporate a good range of source materials into an assignment, including your own creative input, comparisons, arguments and critical commentary.
- Be careful with your own work; don't leave electronic or paper copies lying around, keep electronic drafts in a password-protected environment, and be very cautious about lending someone else your notes unless you are involved in an official collaboration with them on a piece of group work.

4 ***University policy on academic misconduct***

4.1 The University is committed to the universal academic standard, which requires that students must not submit materials which contain someone else's work without

appropriate acknowledgement. In order to uphold this we will do our best to ensure that:

- 1) students have full and clear information on what is meant by academic misconduct, how to avoid it, and what to do if suspected of it.
 - 2) staff are aware of the need to support students in using the appropriate conventions for acknowledging sources.
 - 3) staff understand how to design and set assignments in order to avoid academic misconduct.
 - 4) electronic systems for detecting plagiarism are available to assist staff and students (see Appendix 1: University Statement on the use of Turnitin).
 - 5) the University's regulatory framework is regularly reviewed in order to:
 - maximise fairness and consistency of treatment of students suspected of plagiarism.
 - try to ensure that the most serious penalties are imposed where it is clear that students have sought to gain unfair advantage through academic misconduct.
- 4.2 To support the above, the University has issued several documents:
- 1) guidance on academic integrity, and academic misconduct (this document).
 - 2) revised Academic Misconduct Regulations (which are available in the Academic Quality Handbook).
 - 3) guidelines for all staff, including members of the Academic Misconduct Panels, on how to apply these Rules and Procedures.

5 What should I do if I am suspected of academic misconduct?

- 5.1 This is *extremely* unlikely to happen if you follow the regulations and guidance provided by the University, and are confident that you fully understand how to cite and reference sources in assignments on your programme. However, if a student's work is believed to contain an instance of academic misconduct, this will be dealt with using the *Academic Misconduct Regulations*.
- 5.2 All formal communication with a student involved in a case of academic misconduct, including cases deemed to be minor, will be confirmed in writing.
- 5.3 If the person marking the assessment judges that it is appropriate, the penalty may consist of an adjustment of the mark. An adjustment in marks is used where this is a proportionate penalty for academic misconduct, and should not be taken to indicate that there is any 'acceptable' level of misconduct. For this to happen:
- 1) the student must acknowledge that academic misconduct has taken place, and accept the penalty given.
 - 2) the penalty must also be agreed by the module leader.
 - 3) the incident and the penalty must be reported to the Officer of the University Academic Misconduct Panel and the relevant Module Assessment Board, and will be recorded on the student's file.
- 5.4 Where an incident is *not* dealt with by way of a marking adjustment, or where the student does not acknowledge that academic misconduct has taken place, the case is submitted to the University Academic Misconduct Panel. The incident will be investigated following the procedure set out in the *Academic Misconduct Regulations*. The Module Leader will

submit a full report of the allegation to the Panel, which will decide on the penalty (if any) to be imposed.

- 5.5 The Panel will usually make every effort to identify the sources which a student is alleged to have used but failed to acknowledge. However, where this is not possible a decision may be made on 'the balance of probabilities'. This means that a student may still be judged to have engaged in academic misconduct even where the actual sources have *not* been identified. In such cases a decision might be based on differences between the style of writing in the assignment and in other work by the student, on similarities to the work of other students, etc.
- 5.6 Any student who is involved in an academic misconduct investigation by the University Academic Misconduct Panel will be informed (in writing) of:
- 1) the reasons why they are suspected of academic misconduct; they will be sent a copy of the Module Leader's report and the procedure under which the panel operates.
 - 2) their right to attend the panel meeting and argue their case.
 - 3) various sources of advice and support.
- 5.7 The student will be given five working days' notice of the Panel meeting.
- 5.8 If the student wishes to attend the Panel meeting to contest the allegation, they must confirm this in writing. The student may also contest the allegation by a written submission to the Panel, even if not attending. If the student decides *not* to contest the allegation, this will be taken as an admission that academic misconduct has taken place.
- 5.9 Students who decide to attend the Panel meeting can be accompanied to this by another member of the University community (e.g. a Students' Union officer). If the student does not wish to attend in person, or is unable to do so, s/he can ask another member of the University community to attend as their representative. For students who are not able to attend a hearing, other arrangements (e.g. telephone or video conferencing, Skype, etc.) can be made to enable them to participate in the Panel discussions. If a student has said that they plan to attend the Panel meeting but then does not arrive, the meeting can still proceed.
- 5.10 The Panel decide whether or not the allegation of misconduct is to be upheld and will recommend a penalty to the relevant Assessment Board. The Assessment Board cannot overturn the Panel's finding, and in most cases will impose the penalty recommended by the Panel. However, where there is valid reason, and paying due regard to the Panel's recommendation, the Board may impose either a penalty that is either harsher or more lenient.
- 5.11 Penalties for academic misconduct will be decided on a case-by-case basis, and therefore may vary. Factors which will be taken into account when deciding a penalty include the severity of the misconduct, any previous academic misconduct by the student, and whether the misconduct was deliberate. Please note that the student's intentions will *not* be considered when deciding whether or not academic misconduct took place, and there is no 'acceptable' level of academic misconduct.

- 5.12 Students can lodge an appeal against the outcome of an assessment decision resulting from a judgement of academic misconduct. They should do so by using the University's Academic Appeals procedure, basing their appeal on the grounds recommended by this procedure. Please note that claims of extenuating circumstances are not normally grounds for appeal against either a finding of misconduct, or the penalty imposed.