

# Academic Misconduct

## Self-Help Resources: *What to do if you receive an allegation*

This advice is to help you respond to (or ideally avoid) any allegations of Academic Misconduct raised against you by the University. The University's policy on Academic Misconduct is interested in upholding academic integrity. [Academic integrity](#) means acting with honesty and integrity within the academic community. Every student and researcher at the University is responsible for maintaining academic integrity.

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The University also has policy around General Misconduct, which is about the behaviour of a student that is deemed disruptive or offensive. You can read more about that [here](#). Alternatively, if you want to raise an issue about someone else's conduct that you believe may be considered a form of misconduct, then you should have a look at our advice on how to submit a Complaint or Grievance [here](#).

## What is Academic Misconduct?

In University policy, academic misconduct is given a board definition. [Academic Board Regulation](#) s42 states it is:

*... by act or omission does anything which is intended to or is likely to have the effect of obtaining for that student or any other person an advantage in the performance of assessment, by unauthorised, unscholarly or unfair means whether or not the advantage was obtained.*

A central aspect of Academic Misconduct is producing original work and citing any material you have drawn from, including your own past work. It also extends to include other types of unqualified advantage. The University takes academic integrity very seriously.

Researchers and students alike are all expected to be familiar with the University's academic integrity guidelines and maintain a strict adherence to policy. Everyone at the University, from student to researcher, is expected to take individual responsibility for maintaining academic integrity in their work.

Academic Misconduct can include circumstances such as:

- copying someone else's work
- allowing someone to copy your work
- failing to cite work you have referenced or citing it incorrectly
- forging documents to receive special consideration
- buying or selling essays
- working on an assignment with a fellow student that is not a group-work assignment
- taking unauthorised materials into an exam. This includes materials that are not used or accidentally carried into an exam, so exceptional care should be taken to not have these material in your pockets

Many other situations could be deemed Academic Misconduct. If you have any questions relating to your specific situation, please [contact us](#).

## **I've been accused of Academic Misconduct. What happens now?**

So, the University has sent you a formal Academic Misconduct Allegation. The formal allegation notice should include:

- a clear outline of the nature of the misconduct
- all evidence relating to the allegation must be attached (this may be a copy of your assignment with problematic sections highlighted, a copy of the incident report made by the exam invigilator or the like)
- an opportunity to respond in writing, as well as an invitation to attend a hearing, and specific timelines for these responses
- name the chair of the committee that will be investigating the allegation
- inclusion of, or reference to, the penalties that can be applied under [Academic Board Regulation Part 9](#) and the [Student Academic Integrity Policy](#)

We strongly encourage you to respond to the allegations in writing and attend your hearing. Your approach should be honest and forthcoming, as any deceptive behaviour will likely attract a more serious outcome. UMSU Advocacy service can assist you through both processes, so please get in touch before replying to the formal notice.

Your written submission should set out your version of events and detail any exceptional circumstances that you feel should be taken into consideration. It should respond to each aspect of the allegation outlined by the University. We encourage you to make a start on your written response by using our template - you can download it [here](#).

All allegations must be sent to you within 10 working days of the matter being brought to the attention of Dean of the faculty in which the suspected Academic Misconduct has occurred. This will be sent to your preferred mailing address, could be hand delivered, and/or may also be emailed to your student email account.

If the matter regards plagiarism or collusion, the University must collect evidence before they notify the Dean. The Head of Department may invite you to a meeting to discuss their concerns, however, this is not mandatory. Once enough evidence is collected, the Head of Department must determine whether the plagiarism and/or collusion is minor, inadvertent or very serious. All academic staff must follow this process; they cannot penalise you (for example, deduct marks) if they have not gone through the formal procedure.

## **What happens at the Academic Misconduct hearing?**

The committee at the hearing should consist of two senior academics and a student representative. For undergraduate students, this student representative must be the President of UMSU or their nominee, and for graduate students, it must be a nominee of the President of the Graduate Student Association (GSA). You are allowed to take a support person with you to the meeting if you inform the committee 24 hours in advance. This support person is not permitted to speak and must not disrupt the proceedings.

At the meeting you will be given an opportunity to discuss your account of the situation in greater detail. You should highlight the points you made in your written submission. The committee will also ask whatever questions it deems relevant to the investigation, and you should answer them truthfully.

There must be a majority decision from the committee for the allegation to be upheld, otherwise it will be dismissed. If the committee upholds the allegation, it may apply penalties consistent with the [Academic Board Regulation Part 9](#) and the [Student Academic Integrity Policy](#).

You should receive notice of the committee's decision, any penalties imposed, and information about [how to appeal the decision](#) within five business days of the hearing.

## **Wait – penalty – what will that be in my case?**

If the Student Discipline Committee upholds the allegation, they must issue a penalty. The penalties range in severity from a warning (reprimand) with no academic impact, all the way to the termination of your enrolment. Penalties are discussed further on our Appeals to the Academic Board page [here](#). The Academic Board has also published a guide to possible penalties here. This will give you an idea what is considered a proportionate penalty for the various types of allegations.

## **I've been asked to attend a meeting but haven't received a formal allegation of academic misconduct. What should I expect?**

If you've been asked to attend a meeting by one of your teaching staff about an issue relating to academic integrity, it could be for a number of different reasons.

Informal meetings happen often to help educate students about academic integrity. An 'educative' meeting could result in you being advised on correct referencing techniques, or to complete some learning materials on academic integrity. You may also be asked to revise and resubmit work after fixing minor issues with referencing or citations. These are all supposed to be helpful, educative, tools to help you avoid serious issues in the future.

You may also be asked to attend a meeting where you're not told very much about what you're going to be discussing, which can be a bit scary. These kinds of meetings may be called because staff may see a possibility that there has been a misunderstanding that you could potentially clarify, or they may suspect you have done something not quite right and they want to know more. Meetings like this should be focussed on staff trying to understand more fully what has happened so they can decide what they might need to do in response. These conversations need to be fair and polite, and ultimately are designed to try and help you understand academic integrity rules clearly.

As explained above, the University bears the burden of proof in making a case against you if they think you have breached the rules. There are several ways they can collect enough evidence to support a formal allegation. For instance, they can ask you questions about how you completed your assignment or ask you to show how you came about a particular answer. However, they are not permitted to search for incriminating information from you or ask you leading questions about academic misconduct to help them build their case against you. This includes asking you to confess information for fear of things becoming much worse if you don't comply.

During the course of an informal meeting, if it appears that deliberate and significant Academic Misconduct has occurred, the teaching staff must end the meeting and inform you that they intend to pursue a formal allegation. Informal meetings cannot be used as substitutes for proper, formal hearings. No penalties for misconduct can be applied as a result of an informal meeting. Only a properly constituted committee can decide if you have committed Academic Misconduct or not, and if they form this view, only then can any penalties be applied.

It is important that you know that anything discussed at the meeting could be used to formalise an allegation of misconduct against you. Due to this, if you are invited to a meeting like this we suggest you ask some more questions to help you prepare. It can certainly be alarming to receive an email asking you to attend a meeting when you don't know what it is about. Rest assured, you are absolutely within your rights to request more information before you turn up. If you receive such an email from academic staff, we suggest you respond politely and ask:

- what the purpose of the meeting is
- what the scope of the meeting is
- which parts of the policy relate to the reason the meeting being called

You should feel comfortable and confident to ask these questions so you are able to adequately prepare yourself for the meeting. Once you receive a response, we suggest you contact the UMSU Advocacy Service and include all the correspondence on the matter so we can advise you on how to prepare. You can contact us [here](#).

## **What is plagiarism?**

Plagiarism is the presentation of written work, findings or ideas as your own without proper acknowledgement of the original source. Examples include:

- copying a published author's text/arguments without providing an appropriate reference (this includes websites)
- paraphrasing a published author's text/arguments without providing an appropriate reference (this includes websites)
- handing in someone else's work as your own
- making superficial changes to another's work and then handing it in as your own
- submitting work you have already handed in for another course/subject, or the same subject you failed to complete earlier (yes, you are not allowed to plagiarise yourself)
- in certain disciplines, the use of mathematical/design concepts while neglecting to reference these concepts

## **What is self-plagiarism?**

You may think that because you produced a piece of work in another subject or for a previous — but different — assessment, it's yours to use again. This is actually self-plagiarism (or auto-plagiarism), which is a form of Academic Misconduct as it constitutes an unfair advantage over students who are working at the same assessment from the ground up. It is a form of "double-dipping" where you are seeking to get two lots of credit for one piece of work.

In some cases, using your own work again for a new assessment may be permitted as long as you acknowledge the source. However, using large sections or completely recycling your work is likely to be considered Academic Misconduct. Ultimately, self-plagiarism is not fair and the University takes it very seriously. Short-cutting like this is also cheating yourself of an opportunity to learn something else.

## **What is collusion? What can I discuss with other people?**

Collusion is where one student is alleged to have helped another student by allowing them to copy their work. This also includes working together on an assessment or giving each other the answers, when it is not a group assessment. The University regards students who permit their work to be copied as seriously as those who did the copying, and the penalties can be the same.

Acceptable collaboration can be defined as any constructive educational and intellectual practice that aims to enhance learning through interaction between students. Examples of acceptable collaboration include:

- students discussing general themes and concepts
- students discussing the requirements of an assignment

The difference between appropriate collaboration and unacceptable collusion or plagiarism is based on the principle that producing the work remains the individual responsibility of the student.

## **What about group work?**

Many courses use group work or syndicates to perform assessment tasks. Group work is defined as a formally established project to be done by a number of students in common, resulting in a single project or numerous associated assessment projects.

Make sure that you understand the assessment requirements with group work. Even though you may be required to work collaboratively, you may be required to submit independent reports that are your own work and therefore need to be careful of not colluding or plagiarising from your group members. If in doubt, ask your tutor or lecturer for clarification.

## **What about exams?**

Academic Misconduct in exams will be alleged where a student is suspected of seeking an unfair academic advantage to which they are not entitled during the exam. These rules apply in both online and in-person exams. For example:

- taking any unauthorised materials (e.g. study notes — if it is not an open book exam — unapproved dictionaries, or dictionaries which have notes in any language written in them, unauthorised calculators, or formula on your calculator, having your phone on you rather than under your chair, or not in view in an online exam, and/or having your phone switched on) into the exam venue. This includes having any of these items in your pockets, even if they are not used.
- failing to follow the direction of an invigilator
- copying the work of another student (with or without their consent)
- allowing another student to copy from you or helping them in some way
- having someone else sit the exam for you
- writing anything on your exam booklet during reading time (even your student number)
- writing after the call to put pens down at the end of the exam

If you are suspected of any of the above conduct during the exam, an invigilator may speak to you about on the spot, or you may receive an allegation later. If you have taken unauthorised materials into the in-person exam, they will be confiscated when seen by an exam invigilator. In an online exam, you may be asked to remove an item or show it is turned off, for example. If you have been confronted by an invigilator you still have the right to complete the examination and you should attempt to do this to the best of your ability.

Make sure you read the exam cover sheet thoroughly to ensure you do not have anything on you that you shouldn't have. Listen to the announcements when you arrive as these may include an amnesty period for you to remove any unauthorised materials prior to the commencement of the exam.

Invigilators are required to report any suspicious behaviour which may be a contravention of exam rules. They do not have a role in determining whether or not that behaviour is Academic Misconduct. They must complete an incident report for any such issues, and this will be sent to the faculty where any further action is determined by the Dean. Not all incident reports will be acted upon, but most will result in a formal allegation notice being sent to the student. If you know an incident report has been completed by an invigilator in the exam, you need to wait until you receive a formal allegation before you can take any action.

It is important to understand that your intentions are not the primary consideration in these matters. You are considered to have sought an unfair advantage even if you did not actually look at or use the material or it was irrelevant to the exam, as the act of merely having unauthorised materials in an exam is still a breach of [Academic Board Regulation Part 9](#) and the [Student Academic Integrity Policy](#). In some cases, you may face an allegation of Academic Misconduct even if you didn't realise you weren't allowed to take certain material into an exam, or if you borrowed someone's calculator with disallowed formula programmed in. It is similar to parking in the wrong place, or failing to validate your public transport ticket; if you are caught, you will generally face a penalty, regardless of your intention. This is why we recommend you read all exam materials and instructions carefully.

### **What about Generative AI (eg. ChatGPT)**

Generative AI technology such as ChatGPT is a new area which is evolving quickly. The University currently is giving mixed messages to students about its approach to Generative AI and potential academic misconduct. On one hand the message has been that the University is focused on how to embrace the opportunities this kind of technology presents to academics and students in the long term. Rather than banning their use entirely, the University acknowledges that tools like ChatGPT should be incorporated into day-to-day life, work, and learning, in the name of innovation. But they do need to be used responsibly, and cited appropriately, in order for their use in completing assessments not to breach academic integrity principles.

So on the other hand, the University has been using Turnitin's 'AI Detection' software in addition to existing similarity reports since April 2023. Unlike similarity reports, these AI reports are not accessible to students.

Ultimately, determining whether the use of Generative AI constitutes academic misconduct or not will require further consideration of whether the use is authorised, or unauthorised. This means that if you're thinking of using Generative AI in your assessment, you should first discuss it with your tutor or lecturer to find out the examiner's view of the use.

If you have received an academic misconduct notice alleging use of Generative AI, it's a good idea to contact us before you respond.

## Useful resources and relevant Policy

- [\*Student Academic Integrity Policy\*](#)
- [\*Academic Board Regulation\*](#)
- [\*Vice Chancellor Regulation Part 6\*](#)
- [General Misconduct webpage](#)
- [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency protecting academic integrity resources](#)
- [UMSU Advocacy Service template](#)
- [Calculating Working Days](#)
- [Contact UMSU Advocacy Service](#)