

University Policy on Academic Integrity



Summary			
The Policy sets out an institutional approach to academic integrity for staff and students and is based on developing a common understanding and application of values and expectations.			
Scope - This document applies to:			
All students registered on programmes of study leading to an award of the University of Bristol at undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research levels. It also covers, where appropriate, visiting and occasional students who submit work to the University of Bristol for assessment. The values of academic integrity are also upheld by academic and professional services staff.			
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Further information for [Academic integrity for assessments affected by COVID-19](#) (PDF, 201kB) during 2019/20 is available.

University Policy on Academic Integrity

Introduction

The policy defines academic integrity at the University of Bristol for staff and students and is based on developing a common understanding and application of values and expectations. It covers all students registered on programmes of study leading to an award of the University of Bristol at undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research levels. It also covers, where appropriate, visiting and occasional students who submit work to the University of Bristol for assessment. The values of academic integrity are upheld by academic and professional services staff.

1. Definition of academic integrity

1.1. Academic integrity is integral to university study and academic life. Staff and students combine to form a community and culture of learning with the core values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage.¹ These values are mutually reinforcing and form the foundations for the University's approach:

- 1.1.1. **Honesty** underpins academic integrity and is a prerequisite for the values of trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Intellectual and personal honesty starts with the individual and extends through a community and culture of learning. Staff and students are honest with themselves and with each other.
- 1.1.2. **Trust** results from a basis of honesty. A community and culture of learning fosters and relies on mutual trust between staff and students to encourage and support the free exchange of ideas. Trust is developed through the clear and consistent application of standards and behaviour. Communities built on trust enable co-operation by creating an environment where staff and students treat each other with fairness and respect.
- 1.1.3. **Fairness** is essential for a community and culture of learning, where transparent and reasonable expectations, including through accurate and impartial assessment, are applied equitably. Consistent and just responses for transgressions in academic integrity forms a part of fair treatment. Staff and students behave fairly in their interactions with each other within a culture of respect.
- 1.1.4. **Respect** fosters active, open engagement with a diversity of opinions and encourages an interactive and co-operative learning community. Respect is reciprocal and involves staff and students showing respect for themselves, through facing challenges with integrity, and showing respect for others by valuing diversity of opinion and appreciating the need to challenge and refine

¹ The values and descriptions have been adapted from *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity, Second Edition*, published by the International Centre for Academic Integrity (<http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/resources-2.php>).

ideas. Developing a culture of respect is an individual and collective responsibility.

1.1.5. **Responsibility** for sustaining a community and culture of learning requires staff and students to protect the personal and collective integrity of their work. Personal and shared accountability combine in upholding academic standards. Holding on to those high standards in all circumstances requires courage to succeed.

1.1.6. **Courage** and determination are required to apply the values of academic integrity. Courage is the capacity to act in accordance with one's convictions even in challenging situations. A community and culture of learning rests on and fosters integrity and courage as mutually dependent characteristics. Staff and students not only make decisions with integrity, they must also have the courage to follow their decisions with action.

1.2. The expectation is that all students and staff will commit to high standards of academic integrity through applying these core values to their university study and academic life. Academic integrity includes, for example, acknowledging all sources used through citations and referencing, presenting accurate data, declaring where previously submitted work has been re-used, complying with ethical and other obligations, and meeting the standard of behaviour required for all academic endeavour.

1.3. For students, academic integrity is fostered through learning with a focus on developing awareness and skills, grounded within the Bristol Skills Framework. The academic integrity approach provides a context for learning and a common understanding of expectations that does not assume students and staff have prior knowledge before their arrival at the University of Bristol.

1.4. The University's approach balances opportunities to develop and nurture academic integrity with recognition that transgressions undermine its core values.

2. Responsibilities

2.1. Academic integrity is strengthened when local practice is aligned with the core values and supported by institutional policies and procedures. There are therefore multiple layers of responsibility within the University structure:

2.1.1. The **University** provides the overarching academic integrity approach, with clear and fair policies, procedures and statements that can be understood and consistently implemented. It promotes the core values of academic integrity and allocates appropriate resources and developmental opportunities for students and staff. It ensures that any alleged transgressions are investigated fairly and that any penalties are transparent and just. It is responsible, through the Research Degrees Examination Board, for determining academic penalties for research students where transgressions in research degree examinations have been proved. It is responsible for the Student Disciplinary Regulations. The University Academic Quality and Standards Committee has oversight of academic integrity

- 2.1.2. Each **faculty** nurtures academic integrity within their disciplines. Faculties promote the academic integrity approach, contribute to promoting the core values of academic integrity within their faculty and also investigate alleged transgressions. Faculties are responsible for determining academic penalties for taught students where transgressions have been proved, overseen by their Faculty Board of Examiners. Faculty Education Managers are responsible for records, monitoring and reports on academic misconduct within their faculty.
 - 2.1.3. Each **school** nurtures academic integrity within their programmes, contributes to promoting the core values of academic integrity within their school and investigates alleged transgressions for taught students.
 - 2.1.4. Each **programme** nurtures academic integrity for its students and provides opportunities to develop relevant skills and understanding within the subject.
- 2.2. More broadly, students and staff have a shared responsibility in upholding the values of academic integrity in their work:
- 2.2.1. **Students** are responsible for adopting the academic integrity approach in all aspects of their studies and for developing good academic practice. Students should familiarise themselves with their responsibilities in relation to those values and the consequences of transgression. Students should take advantage of training, guidance and other information made available to them so that they may develop skills and knowledge on good academic practice.
 - 2.2.2. **Staff** are responsible for adopting the academic integrity approach in their work. Staff involved in the teaching, tutoring or supervision of students must, with appropriate guidance, be able to support their students in adopting the academic integrity approach, including by signposting them to relevant training and guidance if necessary. Staff should set an example for their students on how the core values of academic integrity are put into practice.

3. Resources for students and staff

- 3.1. The academic integrity approach centres on a community and culture of learning. Resources and guidance at central and local level fosters academic integrity as an integral part of university study and academic life.

Resources for students

- 3.2. Academic integrity is addressed as part of induction and orientation in all programmes at all levels of study, is inbuilt as part of the curriculum in taught programmes and is considered as part of annual progress reviews for research students.
- 3.3. Training in academic integrity is provided through generic study skills, aligned to the Bristol Skills Framework, and continues through the contextual support within schools and programmes. Targeted advice is made available where a student is identified as struggling with aspects of academic integrity or to understand good practice.
- 3.4. Turnitin, a text-comparison system used by the University, may be used in a formative, developmental way to assist students in understanding the appropriate use of sources

and raising awareness of plagiarism. This may help students to develop their authorial voice, particularly when students discuss Turnitin originality reports with tutors, supervisors or other academics.

Resources for staff

- 3.5. Staff on CREATE engage in an online discussion as part of Disciplinary Learning Groups to explore what academic integrity means firstly within their own academic practice and then to review how they support students in ensuring academic integrity across their work.

4. Academic misconduct

- 4.1. The University's approach to academic integrity centres on its positive aspects but with a recognition that transgressions undermine its core values. Academic misconduct is taken seriously by the University and is categorised as follows. Annex A to this policy provides guidance on each of these categories.

- 4.1.1. *Cheating in examinations, tests or other assessments:* Attempting to gain an unfair advantage in an examination or test, including through impersonation, collusion, and procuring work from a third party.
- 4.1.2. *Fabrication or falsification:* Presenting fictitious or distorted data, results, evidence, research or other material as factual and accurate.
- 4.1.3. *Plagiarism:* Using words, ideas or work products attributable to another identifiable person or source without attributing the work to the source from which it was obtained in a situation in which there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship in order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain.²
- 4.1.4. *Re-use of work:* Re-using one's own work without declaration and permission when it has already been used for credit in an award from the University of Bristol or elsewhere, or without declaration for work that has been published. Research students are strongly encouraged to publish their work, including prior to submission and examination, but it is essential that they include appropriate referencing for published work in their dissertation.
- 4.1.5. *Breaching ethical or other obligations:* Failing to comply with the University's Ethics Policy (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-governance/ethics/uni-ethics/>) or with any regulatory, legal, professional or contractual obligations, including on copyright and Intellectual Property.
- 4.1.6. *Misconduct in behaviour:* Failing to meet the core values of academic integrity, such as honesty, fairness and respect.

- 4.2. The University distinguishes between these different types of academic misconduct and the seriousness of the transgression in each case. Instances of plagiarism, for example, may be poor academic practice, where the student is struggling to find their voice,

² Plagiarism definition is taken from the International Centre for Academic Integrity (<http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/integrity-1.php>).

unintentional plagiarism, where the student requires further developmental work, and intentional plagiarism, where a penalty is appropriate.

4.3. Transgressions in academic integrity for students are classified in terms of severity as:

4.3.1. *Poor academic practice* – Minor and first instances of poor referencing, incorrect, or missing attribution for small sections of copied work, or similar infringements. There should be no suggestion that there is an intention to deceive in these cases.

4.3.2. *Moderate academic misconduct* – Instances of misconduct where the student would gain an unfair advantage, such as using the ideas and concepts derived from the work of others without attribution, the inclusion of incorrect or missing attribution for larger sections of copied work, copying the work of another student, or repeated poor academic practice. The re-use of work already submitted without declaration may fall into this category, depending on the nature of the re-use.

4.3.3. *Serious academic misconduct* – Serious instances of misconduct where the student would gain a substantial unfair advantage or where there is an intention to deceive. This category includes cheating in examinations, tests or other assessments; fabrication or falsification; extensive plagiarism or attempts to avoid plagiarised text being recognised; and repeated moderate academic misconduct. The re-use of work already submitted without declaration may fall into this category, depending on the nature of the re-use.

4.4. A set of penalties is available to address instances of academic misconduct, which takes account of the classification and extent of the transgression, the level of study of the student, and uses the balance of probabilities as the standard of proof. Where students have previously received a penalty for academic misconduct, this will be given due consideration when imposing a new penalty for a subsequent transgression.

4.5. The penalties available are set out in the University Examination Regulations, the Student Disciplinary Regulations and, where relevant, the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes*. All penalties and instances of academic misconduct will be documented on the student's record.

Annex A: Guidance on academic misconduct

The academic integrity policy categorises the types of academic misconduct. Guidance on the categories of academic misconduct is set out below and aims to assist students and staff in understanding what constitutes misconduct in each category.

Cheating in examinations, tests or other assessments

Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in an examination, test or other assessment is deemed to be serious academic misconduct.

Cheating in examinations and tests

The use of unauthorised materials or communications, obtaining a copy of an examination or test paper before the examination or test, and the impersonation of a candidate for an examination or test constitute deliberate attempts to deceive. See the University's Code of Conduct on Examinations and its position on examination offences (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/directory/exams/exam-day/>) and the University Examination Regulations (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/student-rules-regs/>).

Collusion between students

If two or more students collude in an unauthorised collaboration for work that is submitted for assessment by each student as their own in an identical or substantially similar form, this constitutes a deliberate attempt to deceive. Collusion also occurs if a student knowingly allows their work to be submitted by another student.

Authorised collaborations, where students work in groups for projects, assignments or research activities, are valid academic endeavours and are not collusion. Where there are authorised collaborations, students should be provided with clear guidance on how collaborative work will be assessed, including how individual performance will be marked separately and how it will relate to the work of the whole group.

Copying work

If a student submits work for assessment that has been copied from another student or other person, this constitutes a deliberate attempt to deceive and plagiarism (see the section on plagiarism below). Copying is similar to collusion but with the legitimate author of the work being unaware that their work has been copied.

Procured work from a third party

If a student procures work from a third party and submits it in full or in part for assessment as their own work, this constitutes a deliberate attempt to deceive. Procured work includes contract cheating, where work is purchased from an 'essay mill' or similar entity, as well as obtaining work from, for example, family members or other students whether there is a payment or not. Procuring work for assessment is an extreme form of plagiarism (see the section on plagiarism below).

Fabrication or falsification

Any attempt to present fictitious or distorted data, results, evidence, research or other material as factual and accurate is deemed to be serious academic misconduct.

Reporting on research or experiments that have not been undertaken, or reporting on invented or exaggerated data, or making false and misleading claims based on fictitious or misrepresented

results, constitute deliberate attempts to deceive. Presenting research or experiments undertaken by others, or data collected by others, as one's own is also an attempt to deceive (see *Regulations on Research Misconduct* – <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-governance/practice-training/policies-guidance/>). Collaborative work, where the collaboration has been acknowledged and referenced, is not included here.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is when an individual presents work as their own with the unacknowledged inclusion of the work of others. It is defined as using words, ideas or work products attributable to another identifiable person or source without attributing the work to the source from which it was obtained in a situation in which there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship in order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain.³ Plagiarism covers unattributed use of the work of others and inadequate or misleading referencing.

Instances of plagiarism are on a spectrum from poor academic practice, where the individual is struggling to find their voice, through unintentional plagiarism, where further developmental work is required, to intentional plagiarism, where there is a deliberate attempt to deceive. The consequences will depend on where the instance of plagiarism sits on this spectrum, with minor and first instances of poor referencing deemed to be poor academic practice through to extensive plagiarism and/or attempts to avoid plagiarised text being recognised, which is deemed to be serious academic misconduct.

Plagiarism may be in a written or non-written form. Appropriating the work of others as one's own from publications, webpages, unpublished texts, computer coding, formulae, designs and models, diagrams, tables, maps, illustrations, artefacts, artistic works, and so on, are all forms of plagiarism.

Plagiarism in written form includes word-for-word copying, close paraphrasing where some words have been deleted, altered or reordered with minor changes to grammar (sometimes called 'patchwriting') and the presentation of the concepts of others as one's own including through more sophisticated paraphrasing. Plagiarism in non-written form may be categorised in the same way: direct copying, making minor alterations to the work, or presenting the concepts of others as one's own.

Third-party proofreading and plagiarism

Individuals are encouraged to proofread their own work as this is an essential skill in academic writing. For longer pieces of work, such as research degree dissertations, it may however be appropriate to seek the assistance from a third party (a professional proofreader or family member, for example) for proofreading as long as it does not alter the intellectual content of the work.

Third-party proofreading should be limited to checking and suggesting corrections on errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, formatting and presentation. It is unacceptable for a third-party proofreader to check, amend or suggest ideas, arguments, subject matter, or the structure of the work, as this would compromise authorship and may constitute plagiarism.

Re-use of work

³ Plagiarism definition is taken from the International Centre for Academic Integrity (<http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/integrity-1.php>).

Re-using one's own work (either in full or in part) without declaration and permission when it has already been used in a summative assessment for credit in an award from the University of Bristol or elsewhere, or without declaration for work that has been published, is deemed to be academic misconduct (and is sometimes called 'self-plagiarism'). The consequences will depend on the nature of the undeclared re-use and whether there was a deliberate attempt to deceive.

Published authors should cite themselves when they draw on their published works. Research students are strongly encouraged to publish their work, including prior to submission and examination, but it is essential that they include appropriate referencing for any published work in their dissertation. For multi-authored published works, research students should provide a summary in their dissertation setting out their contribution to publications resulting from their work to provide clarity on each author's contribution.

Breaching ethical or other obligations

Failing to comply with the University's Ethics Policy (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-governance/ethics/uni-ethics/>) or with any regulatory, legal, professional or contractual obligations, including on copyright and Intellectual Property, is deemed to be academic misconduct. The consequences will depend on the nature of the noncompliance.

Misconduct in behaviour

Failing to meet the core values of academic integrity, such as honesty, fairness and respect is deemed to be academic misconduct. This misconduct may be revealed through the categories set out above or may relate to other behaviour that disrupts or undermines a community and culture of learning. The consequences will depend on the nature of the misconduct in behaviour.