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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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.

        You can expect the University to: Use appropriate assessments and ensure they are conducted with consistency and fairness whilst also maintaining academic standards.

        The University expects you to: Demonstrate intellectual and personal honesty in your preparation for and undertaking of assessments. This also applies to formative assessments which are designed to support your study in subsequent years.

        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.

        You can expect the University to: Operate under the assumption that most students will not seek to gain an unfair advantage during assessments, whatever their format. A range of standard procedures will be used to identify possible academic misconduct which will subsequently be investigated.

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[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).

[Remote invigilation](#) of online assessment will only be used where there is a strong pedagogic case and it is required by a professional accrediting body.

The University expects you to: Follow the guidance for an individual assessment as to what is allowed and what is not allowed, and to conduct yourself in such a way that you are not seeking to gain an unfair advantage.

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.

You can expect the University to: Provide clear guidance on what is and is not acceptable for each assessment and work to ensure that no student is disadvantaged through their individual circumstances.

The University expects you to: Follow guidance on assessments, and not to seek to gain an unfair advantage over others.

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

You can expect the University to: Respect the circumstances faced by individual students and assess in a compassionate manner whilst maintaining academic standards. The University will also respect the fact that assessment arrangements should be inclusive so that alternative exam arrangements are implemented and effects of geographical location, caring responsibilities, restricted access to technology and the internet, etc. are minimised.

The University expects you to: Respect efforts of fellow students and the University by not seeking to gain an unfair advantage.

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.

You can expect the University to: Provide the guidance and support you require to prepare for and undertake assessments and submit assignments to clearly specified deadlines. The University will use appropriate assessment design so students can demonstrate attainment of learning outcomes allied with varied and sophisticated methods to quality assure. Wide-spread academic misconduct has the potential to affect perceptions of the quality of degrees the University awards.

The University expects you to: Behave in such a way that the perception of the quality of the degree you are undertaking is not compromised as this will affect

not only you but also other students on your degree programme, and the reputation of the University more widely.

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.

You can expect the University to: Demonstrate courage in trusting students to themselves behave with academic integrity throughout assessments and, should it be required, in investigating possible instances of students seeking to gain an unfair advantage and applying penalties as outlined in Assessment Regulations.

The University expects you to: Show courage to resist temptations to seek to gain unfair advantage, to discourage others from doing so and to highlight to the University when such misconduct occurs.

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. Due to the range of potential transgressions different processes may trigger an investigation and penalty. For example, transgressions relating to research by a student may be triggered via the research misconduct policy or the assessment regulations. The appropriate route should be decided upon by the Faculty Education Director based on both the

potential offence and the level of study. Consultation with the Secretary's Office, Heads of Research Governance and other Faculty Officers may be necessary to inform this decision. Any penalties applied should be transparent and just. Academic penalties applied to students should be ratified by Examination Boards for taught students and Research Degrees Examination Board for research students. Students who are undertaking study on a programme with professional accreditation, or are themselves members of a professional body may be subjected to additional procedures (such as fitness to practice or reporting to a registering body) if they undertake academic misconduct. 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. 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.

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 is a text-comparison system used by the University to aid the detection of academic misconduct, often plagiarism. Some programmes may use this software 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. Effective assessment design is the most robust way in which to prevent academic misconduct in assessments. The Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching provides a series of case studies on assessment and authentic learning which are helpful in this regard.

3.6. A University wide network for Academic Integrity Officers is in place to share good practice. Please contact the Academic Quality and Partnership Office for more details.

3.7. Turnitin is a text-comparison system used by the University to aid the detection of academic misconduct, often plagiarism. The Digital Education Office (DEO) provides guidance on its use.

3.8. Advice and resources relating to contract cheating can be found within the annexes of the 'procedure where there is a suspicion of contract cheating'.

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 common categories include:

4.1.1. *Cheating in examinations, tests or other assessments:* Attempting to gain an unfair advantage in an examination or test, including through impersonation and collusion.

4.1.2. *Contract cheating:* procuring work from a third party that may be known or unknow to the individual. A specific procedure should be followed where contract cheating is suspected due to the complex nature of this form of misconduct.

4.1.3. *Fabrication or falsification:* Presenting fictitious or distorted data, results, evidence, research or other material as factual and accurate.

4.1.4. *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]

4.1.5. *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.

4.1.6. *Failing to acknowledge the contribution of others:* research often involves collaborative work and it is important that this is acknowledged fairly and transparently. This applies both to staff planning to publish research and students in their assessments and research publications. Students should ensure they acknowledge the assistance of others in completing assessments.

4.1.7. *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.

4.1.8. *Misconduct in behaviour:* Failing to meet the core values of academic integrity, such as honesty, fairness and respect.

4.2. When deciding upon any action the University considers the individual circumstances of each case of suspected academic misconduct. This includes the status (i.e. staff, student) of the individual(s) involved, the educational level and year of study if they are a student, the likely intention to deceive and the specific details of the case. This is important to ensure that suspected cases are dealt with via the most appropriate policy/process and that outcomes are proportionate. The route by which a case of suspected academic misconduct will be considered may vary depending upon whether it concerns staff or students and the type of offence. For example:

Instances of plagiarism may be poor academic practice, where the student is struggling to find their voice, unintentional plagiarism, where the student requires further developmental work, and intentional plagiarism, where an academic penalty is appropriate.

Instances of non-compliance with ethical frameworks may be considered via the research misconduct policy when staff are involved but may be considered by either research misconduct or the assessment regulations if a taught student is involved, depending upon the specific circumstances of the case (e.g. level of study).

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

4.3. Examples of how transgressions in academic integrity for students might be considered are given below:

4.3.1. *Poor academic practice* – Minor 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. The University has routine practices in place to detect and deal with academic misconduct by students. These practices include:

- The use of text matching software, such as Turnitin, to aid the detection of plagiarism.
- Marking processes where markers can spot very similar answers or inconsistent tone and language.
- Review of contract cheating sites and discussion with company when assessment questions/answers are identified.
- Reviews of mark distributions as carried out by Exam Boards.

Where such practices have given cause for concern of academic misconduct, then the relevant student may be invited by their school to discuss their answers to the assessment to provide a check of the student's understanding as part of an investigative process. Being invited to such a discussion is not an accusation of cheating and would not be entered on a student's record. However, if appropriate, academic misconduct proceedings could be initiated following such a discussion.

4.5. The University Assessment Regulations, Student Disciplinary Regulations, Research Misconduct Policy and where relevant, the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* set out potential penalties for instances of academic misconduct by students.