

# Academic Misconduct Procedure

## Summary

This is the Procedure for students and staff that sets out how suspected cases of academic misconduct by students on taught programmes are investigated and addressed.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University of Bristol expects students to uphold high standards of academic integrity, including in assessment. Where academic misconduct is suspected, a case is investigated with a set of penalties and training opportunities provided where identified.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1. The Academic Misconduct Procedure applies to cases where academic misconduct or poor academic practice by a student on a taught programme or unit is identified. Academic misconduct constitutes: plagiarism, where a student re-uses their own previously submitted work without properly referencing it ('self-plagiarism'), cheating (including, inappropriate use of generative artificial intelligence, contract cheating and collusion), and where there is an ethical breach in a student's research.
- 2.2. This Procedure sets out how the University uses its regulations to determine which procedure should be used to address a case of academic misconduct, and then how a case is investigated and the outcomes of that investigation.

## 3. Definitions

- 3.1. The definitions are provided in the relevant sections.

## 4. Related regulations and procedures

- 4.1. University policy on academic integrity
- 4.2. University regulations on academic misconduct
- 4.3. University regulations on student outcomes appeals

## 5. Confidentiality

- 5.1. All information is processed in accordance with the [Student Fair Processing Notice](#) and requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 5.2. Investigations into academic misconduct are determined with an appropriate level of confidentiality.

## 6. Detecting academic misconduct

- 6.1. Academic misconduct can be identified by staff involved in marking or teaching. It can also be reported or disclosed by a third party, which can instigate this procedure provided that evidence is provided.
- 6.2. Software may be used as to help identify potential academic misconduct. Any suspected cases are reviewed before any action is taken.

Where there are any contractual, security or safety obligations to safeguard student work, a request for exemption from using third-party software to check for plagiarism may be made by a student or appropriate member of staff (e.g. dissertation supervisor). The request is considered for approval by the relevant Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students or delegate. If the request is approved, a relevant member of staff instead undertakes a manual check on the dissertation for academic integrity and plagiarism.

6.3. If academic misconduct is suspected, the case is investigated and considered under one of the following procedures:

- [poor academic practice](#);
- [plagiarism](#);
- [re-using own work with proper acknowledgement](#);
- [cheating](#);
- [ethical breaches in student research](#).

6.4. If a student intends to withdraw from the University, the relevant Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students, or their nominated representative, has discretion whether to proceed with an academic misconduct investigation. The procedure is normally concluded before the withdrawal occurs.

6.5. If a student intends to or has suspended studies, the investigation may be paused until the student returns from the suspension.

## 7. Poor academic practice

### *Definition*

7.1. **Poor academic practice** is minor instances of poor referencing, incorrect, or missing attribution for small sections of copied work, or similar infringements by a student where there is no suggestion that there is an intention to deceive.

### *Consideration*

7.2. If a case, following academic review, is considered to be poor academic practice rather than academic misconduct, it is referred to the unit or programme director.

### *Outcomes*

7.3. If the unit or programme director agrees and decides it is a case of poor academic practice, then:

- a. explicit feedback is provided to the student, with further instruction, as necessary, on proper academic practice, with referral to [study skills support](#) where appropriate,
  - b. the student is advised to review training materials on academic integrity again, and
  - c. the case is held on the student's record for future internal reference.
- 7.4. If the unit or programme director determines that the case amounts to more than poor academic practice, they consult with the designated member(s) of staff in the school (normally the School Academic Integrity Officer). If they agree, the case is referred to the relevant Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students or delegate to consider the case under the relevant procedure.

## 8. Plagiarism

### *Definition*

- 8.1. **Plagiarism** is the unacknowledged inclusion in a student's work of material from published or unpublished work of another source, whether it is intentional or unintentional. If a student(s) directly plagiarises the work of another/others from within their same cohort, this is considered to be collusion, a serious form of cheating. [see [web page](#) for students on plagiarism]

### *Consideration*

- 8.2. Allegations of plagiarism are considered initially by the Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students, or their nominated representative(s), responsible for the home school of the student (i.e. the school where the student is registered).
- 8.3. If multiple cases from one student are being considered as a single allegation, due to the time at which they have been discovered, and these cases cover units from more than one school or faculty then the relevant Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors Education and Students determines which school or faculty will handle the investigation.
- 8.4. The relevant Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students, or their nominated representative, makes an initial determination of how the allegation of plagiarism should be dealt with, within twenty-one days of the concern being raised with them.

### *Outcomes*

- 8.5. Outcomes are either to:

- a. dismiss the case if it is judged that the allegation is not supported by sufficient evidence
- b. ask for more information
- c. decide that the case is poor academic practice
- d. require [additional training](#) and/or provide feedback to the relevant students
- e. convene a panel to investigate the academic misconduct:
  - a School Academic Misconduct Panel (SAMP)
  - a Faculty Academic Misconduct Panel (FAMP), if the case is considered more serious
  - a University Academic Misconduct Panel (UAMP), if the case is considered very serious

8.6. When determining which action to take in 8.5, the following factors are taken into account:

- the educational history of the student and how this may have informed their understanding of academic integrity, including whether there have been previous academic misconduct offences and what support has been already provided and training undertaken by the student
- the nature, extent, and significance of the academic misconduct
- whether the assessment contributes significantly to the student's progress or degree classification.

## 9. Re-use of academic work

### *Definition*

9.1. **Re-use of own academic work** is where a student has submitted, in whole or in part, work which has previously been submitted by them for credit at the University of Bristol or elsewhere, without fully referencing it. It does not include where the previously submitted work was for formative assessment to inform the subsequent summative assessment.

### *Consideration*

9.2. Where the re-use of academic work without appropriate referencing is identified, the School Academic Integrity Officer, or nominated representative, considers the case.

### *Outcomes*

9.3. Outcomes are either:

- a. Providing it is a first offence of this nature and the case is not considered too serious, no further assessment is needed and support is provided to the student to prevent future occurrences, or

b. To require the student to complete the assessment, by:

- rewriting the affected sections, or
- re-doing an equivalent piece of work, or
- completing a reassessment

for the same attempt number as the original assessment, or

c. For second or subsequent offences, to consider the case to be a form of plagiarism, under that procedure.

9.4. In all cases, the school should support the student to understand the issues associated with this practice and why it is unacceptable.

## 10. Cheating

### *Definition*

10.1. Cheating is where a where a student is considered to have broken the rules of an assessment or sought to gain an unfair advantage through unauthorised means. A student engaging in any of the following is considered to be cheating:

- a. accessing and/or making use of unauthorised items or texts during an examination (campus-based or online). For campus-based exams this may occur either at their desk or during an authorised absence from the examination room
- b. planning, participating in or benefitting from collusion during any assessment (campus-based or remote). Collusion is defined as intentionally working with other students to complete an assessment that should be done independently [see [web page](#) for students on collusion]
- c. copying from another student(s)
- d. dishonestly receiving help from another person(s), company or organisation during the examination or assessment
- e. dishonestly giving help to another student during the examination or assessment
- f. acting dishonestly in any way, whether before, during or after the assessment, to obtain an unfair advantage or to assist another candidate to obtain an unfair advantage
- g. buying or commissioning a piece of work and presenting it as a student's own work (contract cheating). [see [web page](#) for students on contract cheating]

- h. unauthorised use of artificial intelligence to complete a piece of work (that means a student does not demonstrate the intended learning outcomes for the relevant unit through that assessment).

A student who shares their work with others is treated with equal seriousness to the student who copies the work. This applies even if it is not clear that academic misconduct was planned.

### *Consideration*

- 10.2. In cases of suspected cheating, further investigative work (i.e. discussion with the student about how they completed the work) may be necessary to determine if cheating may have occurred.
- 10.3. The relevant Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students, or their nominated representative, makes a determination of how the allegation of cheating is dealt with.

### *Outcomes*

- 10.4. Outcomes are either to:
  - a. Dismiss the case if it is judged that the allegation is not supported by sufficient evidence
  - b. Ask for more information
  - c. Decide that the case is poor academic practice
  - d. Require [additional training](#) and/or provide feedback to the relevant students
  - e. Convene a panel to investigate the academic misconduct:
    - a School Academic Misconduct Panel (SAMP)
    - a Faculty Academic Misconduct Panel (FAMP), if the case is considered more serious
    - a University Academic Misconduct Panel (UAMP), if the case is considered very serious
- 10.5. When determining which action to take in 10.4, the following factors are taken into account:
  - the educational history of the student and how this may have informed their understanding of academic integrity, including whether there have been previous academic misconduct offences and what support has been already provided and training undertaken by the student
  - the nature, extent, and significance of the academic misconduct



- whether the assessment contributes significantly to the student's progress or degree classification.

## 11. Ethical breach in student research

### *Definition*

- 11.1. Any of the following are considered to be a **breach of ethics by a student** on a taught programme regarding any substantial piece of research (i.e. a dissertation or equivalent) [see [web page](#) for students on ethical breach in research]:
- a. Not gaining ethical approval before undertaking research, where it is required
  - b. Making a significant deviation from the approved research without being granted ethical approval for the deviation where that is required
  - c. Any other form of research misconduct as defined in the Regulations on Research Misconduct.

### *Consideration*

- 11.2. A student suspected of an ethical breach in their research is reported by the relevant school to the Research Ethics and Integrity Manager in the Research Ethics Team.
- 11.3. For any potential ethical breaches in student research that are reported **prior to** submission of the research, the case is considered under the Research Ethics process [link].
- 11.4. For any potential ethical breaches in student research that are reported **after** submission of the research, the Research Ethics Team, with the relevant Faculty or School Research Ethics Officer, undertakes an initial review of the case to assess the seriousness of the suspected breach and determine whether it:
- constitutes a form of research misconduct as defined in the Regulations on Research Misconduct, in which case it is considered under the research misconduct process, or if not;
  - is sufficiently significant to be considered as academic misconduct, in which case it is considered under this procedure (see below), or if not;
  - can be managed by mitigating action.

### *Outcomes*

- 11.5. Where the breach is deemed to constitute academic misconduct, the case is referred to the relevant Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students, or their nominated representative, to initially determine how it should be dealt with.

11.6. Outcomes are either to:

- a. dismiss the case if it is judged that the allegation is not supported by sufficient evidence
- b. ask for more information
- c. decide that the case is poor academic practice
- d. convene a panel to investigate the academic misconduct:
  - a School Academic Misconduct Panel (SAMP)
  - a Faculty Academic Misconduct Panel (FAMP), if the case is considered more serious
  - a University Academic Misconduct Panel (UAMP), if the case is considered very serious.

11.7. When determining which action to take in 11.5, the following factors are taken into account:

- the educational history of the student and how this may have informed their understanding of academic integrity, including whether there have been previous academic misconduct offences and what support has been already provided and training undertaken by the student
- the nature, extent, and significance of the academic misconduct
- whether the assessment contributes significantly to the student's progress or degree classification.

11.8. A case may also be referred and considered under the Student Disciplinary Regulations and Procedure for suspected student misconduct.

## 12. [Additional training for students on academic integrity](#)

12.1. Due to the potential for misconduct to occur because of different academic practices, and/or poor understanding of expectations, some cases can be dealt with through **additional training and/or feedback** to help students reach the required understanding of expected ways of working.

- a. An undergraduate student is invited to attend an [Academic Integrity Awareness Course](#) if:
  - it is their first offence
  - they are in their first year of study (including those on Foundation programmes), and

- the case is not considered too serious that it cannot be addressed by additional training.

b. A taught postgraduate student is invited to:

- have a supportive discussion with the unit director, or another appropriate staff member on ways of working and expectations of academic integrity, directing the student to study skills support and resources as necessary, and
- redo the plagiarised section(s) of the assessment or complete an equivalent piece of work as the same attempt number, normally no later than two weeks after receiving the additional support, taking into account any other assessment tasks the student may have,

if:

- it is their first offence, and
- they have not previously had the opportunity to submit and receive feedback on a piece of work.

12.2. A case is held on a student's record for future internal reference in case further concerns over academic misconduct are raised.

### **13. Academic integrity awareness course (AIAC)**

13.1. The Head of School is responsible for nominating a member or members of staff to discharge the responsibilities outlined in relation to AIACs, including participating in delivery, inviting students to attend, indicating additional work a student needs to complete and liaising with relevant individuals from other Schools and the Faculty as necessary to deliver this.

13.2. On identifying academic misconduct by any first year undergraduate student (including those on Foundation programmes), the relevant school checks whether the student has already attended the course. If they have, the case is referred to a panel; if not the case is referred to the Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students or nominated member of staff in the faculty.

13.3. If it is determined that the offence can be addressed by training, the, designated member(s) of staff in the School notifies the student in writing of the pieces of work affected, invite them to enrol on an AIAC and inform them of the additional work necessary in order for credit for the unit to be awarded.

- 13.4. Any student referred to an AIAC can appeal this decision. The student may raise their appeal by submitting the AIAC Appeal Form by email to the Student Resolution Service (SRS) within 21 days of being informed they are required to attend an AIAC. The student must set out in writing the grounds on which the appeal is based, as set out in regulation. The student may seek assistance from the Academic Advice Team in the Students' Union when preparing their appeal.
- 13.5. The appeal is heard by a Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students, or equivalently experienced academic who has not been involved in the case. They either:
- a. reject the appeal and confirm attendance at the AIAC is required, or,
  - b. uphold the appeal and revoke the original decision for attendance at an AIAC.
- 13.6. Part of the learning is in the student completing additional work in relation to the assessment in question. This work is considered the same attempt and can be awarded a full range of marks.
- 13.7. Full attendance and engagement are required for successful completion. If a student does not attend the AIAC, or attends but refuses to engage or is disruptive, the work in question is awarded a mark of zero. Standard regulations apply on how this impacts the unit mark and whether reassessment is available.

#### **14. Academic misconduct panels**

##### *Membership of the panel*

- 14.1. **School Academic Misconduct Panel (SAMP):** the Panel consists of two nominated academic members of staff from the student's home school. If the school has a designated Academic Integrity Officer who deals with academic misconduct then this individual can be one of these two academic members on the panel. The panel does not include the student's personal tutor, their research project/dissertation supervisor or the person who identified the suspected misconduct.
- 14.2. For cases of ethical breaches in student research, the Panel includes the relevant School Research Ethics Officer.
- 14.3. The Head of School is responsible for nominating a member or members of staff to discharge the responsibilities of the SAMP.
- 14.4. **Faculty Academic Misconduct Panel (FAMP):** The Panel consists of two academic members of staff without previous direct involvement with the student as a personal tutor

or research project/dissertation supervisor or the individual who investigated the suspected misconduct, including:

- a member of the student's home school;
- a faculty member who belongs to a school other than the student's.
- for cases of ethical breaches in student research, the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Officer.

The Head of Faculty Education and Student Success or nominee attends to advise the panel on procedures and regulations.

14.5. **University Academic Misconduct Panel (UAMP):** A thematic Associate Pro Vice Chancellor convenes and chairs the UAMP, which comprises of at least three academic staff experienced in dealing with academic misconduct cases. The panel should have had no previous direct involvement with the student as a personal tutor or research project/dissertation supervisor, and include:

- a member of the student's home school;
- a member of a faculty other than the student's.

A member of the University Legal Services attends to advise the panel on procedures and regulations.

#### *The panel meeting*

- 14.6. The student is notified in writing of the suspected case (including the pieces of work affected) and invited to interview with a panel. The interview can be in-person or online.
- 14.7. The student can request the option of answering written questions instead of, or as well as, attendance at the panel.
- 14.8. The student may be accompanied by another person at the panel interview. This person may address the panel and confer with the student during the meeting, however, they are not permitted to answer any questions on behalf of the student, unless in exceptional circumstances where they are a qualified lawyer, and the student is unable to do so themselves.
- 14.9. The student may elect not to attend an interview and to submit a statement to the panel instead. Where the student does not attend an interview, unless prevented by unforeseeable circumstances, the panel proceeds to reach its conclusions without the student's attendance.

- 14.10. Notes of the interview with the student(s) is taken, which is circulated after the interview to all parties. A member of staff may attend the panel in order to act as note taker.
- 14.11. An appropriate academic knowledgeable on the work and concern in question, must be offered the opportunity to provide input to the panel and may be required to attend the academic misconduct panel (but only as a witness and not as a panel member) in order to explain the allegation and provide specialist knowledge.

#### *Outcome of the panel meeting*

- 14.12. Once the interview is complete, the panel determines if, on the balance of probabilities, misconduct has occurred or not. The academic misconduct panel may decide to defer a decision until further investigation has taken place. In such cases the panel decides whether they need to engage with the student again to discuss any new material that has been considered as part of the decision-making process.
- 14.13. The panel determines an outcome of their investigation from the list in Table 1 in the Academic Misconduct Regulations [\[add link\]](#). If the panel finds that academic misconduct has occurred, it recommends an outcome to relevant the exam board or Dean of the Faculty. If it finds that academic misconduct has not occurred, the decision is final and no further approval is required.
- 14.14. When considering what would be an appropriate outcome, the panel takes into account the seriousness of the offence. Factors that are considered are:
- the educational history of the student and how this may have informed their understanding of academic integrity
  - whether this is a first or subsequent offence
  - the amount of credit attached to the assessment
  - the significance of academic misconduct in the piece of work
  - the extent to which the academic misconduct undermines the learning objectives of the work
  - whether the assessment contributes significantly to the student's progress or degree classification
  - the degree and effects of the dishonesty.
- 14.15. The student is informed of the panel's decision within two weeks of the date of the panel.

- 14.16. A panel may refer the case back to the relevant Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students or nominated representative with a recommendation that the case be referred to a higher academic misconduct panel if it considers the offence merits a penalty that it doesn't have the power to impose.
- 14.17. If there is a case to answer and the student is registered on a professional programme for which there is a Fitness to Practise (FtP) procedure, academic misconduct may also need to be considered under the FtP procedure. It may be appropriate to include a FtP Case Investigator as a member of the academic misconduct panel to allow the two processes to be completed within a single meeting with the student.

#### *Considering the recommendation of the panel*

- 14.18. The recommendation of an academic misconduct panel is considered by the relevant Exam Board or Dean of a Faculty (for one recommendation from a UAMP).
- 14.19. The normal expectation is that the recommendation of the Academic Misconduct Panel is accepted by the Exam Board given the Panel have made an informed decision based on available evidence. Exceptions to this are set out in regulation.
- 14.20. Where an UAMP decides the case is of such seriousness that the withdrawal of the student from the programme is recommended to the Dean of a Faculty, the relevant Exam Board is informed of the outcome and consider whether any exit award can be made.
- 14.21. The student has the usual right of appeal against a decision of the Exam Board and, in the case of expulsion, the decision of the Dean of the Faculty.
- 14.22. The decision of the Exam Board in relation to the application of the recommendation of an academic misconduct panel, with supporting rationale, is recorded in its minutes.

### **15. Roles and responsibilities**

- 15.1. **A Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students)** is responsible for a number of decisions or actions. They may nominate a suitable representative/s to whom they delegate these actions:
- a. make an initial determination of how an allegation of plagiarism, cheating or where an ethical breach of student research is deemed to constitute academic misconduct is dealt with
  - b. review and decide whether a case is referred to a higher panel or not where a panel determines that it considers the offence to merit a penalty that it does not have the power to impose

- c. consider an appeal from a student to be required to attend an Academic Integrity Awareness Course.
  - d. deciding whether to proceed with an active academic misconduct investigation for a student who intends to withdraw from the University.
- 15.2. **A Head of Faculty Education and Student Success** is responsible for ensuring that advice is available to the Faculty Academic Misconduct Panel on procedures and regulations and for the administration of the procedures.
- 15.3. **A Head of School** is responsible for nominating staff to: (a) discharge responsibilities to staff in their school in relation to the delivery of the Academic Integrity Awareness Course; and (b) be members of School Academic Misconduct Panels.
- 15.4. **Unit or Programme Director** is responsible for addressing cases of poor academic practice with students by way of supportive discussion with students, on ways of working and expectations of academic integrity, directing the student to study skills support and resources as necessary.
- 15.5. **School Academic Integrity Officer** – is responsible: for considering cases where cases of students re-using academic work without appropriate referencing is identified; consulting with the unit or programme director as to whether a case amounts to more than poor academic practice; and be a member of the School Academic Misconduct Panel.
- 15.6. **Faculty or School Research Ethics Officer** - For any potential ethical breaches in student research that are reported **after** submission of the research, the Research Ethics Team, with the relevant Faculty or School Research Ethics Officer, undertakes an initial review of the case. For cases of ethical breaches in student research, the Panel includes the relevant School or Faculty Research Ethics Officer.
- 15.7. **A Thematic Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor** is responsible for convening and chairing a University-level panel.
- 15.8. **A Dean of a Faculty** is responsible for considering a specific recommendation from a UAMP to withdraw a student and decides upon the application of this penalty.