

Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct: Guidance for Students Summer 2020

Introduction

Over the past few weeks, we have explained how we will be conducting examinations and other assessments through the summer assessment and reassessment periods. We now want to make sure all students are very clear on the implications of these changes for academic integrity and academic misconduct.

Definitions

What does academic integrity mean?

Academic integrity is the term used by many universities to describe the importance of students behaving honestly and truthfully when completing assignments or examinations. Generally, this relates to completing and submitting your own work for assessments and avoiding plagiarism by acknowledging other people's ideas when you discuss them.

What is academic misconduct?

The University of Worcester uses the term 'academic misconduct' to describe behaviour where students break rules on academic integrity. Some people would simply call this cheating. Academic misconduct is taken very seriously, and students found to have engaged in such behaviour are penalised. This is because it is vital that every degree awarded to a student is achieved fairly and honestly. We may also have to tell Professional and Statutory bodies if you have been penalised for academic misconduct, which may have implications on your chosen career.

Academic misconduct can take various forms including:

- plagiarism (using other people's work without acknowledgement)
- cheating (asking someone else to do your work for you, which includes where you buy work from people through the internet)
- self-plagiarism (reusing work you have already submitted for a previous assignment)
- collusion (working with another student on an individual assignment or allowing them to copy your work).

A full (but non-exhaustive) list of definitions of academic misconduct can be found under Section 2 of the [Procedures for investigation of cases of alleged Academic Misconduct](#). The Students' Union also provide a helpful [page on academic misconduct](#). There are also useful [University webpages](#) to help with referencing to avoid plagiarism.

We expect students to act with the highest standards of academic integrity in completing all assignments and online examinations. This means taking particular care to avoid behaviour which might be regarded as academic misconduct in the form of collusion.

Collusion

What is collusion?

Collusion is when you work with others on an assignment that is meant to be only your own work. We often encourage you to work together in class; however, except where it is a group assignment, assessment must be your own individual work. We want you to be very clear – especially given the current situation where we are running things differently from normal – that any collusion will still be regarded as academic misconduct, and dealt with accordingly.

The University regulations regarding academic misconduct state that collusion includes when one student produces work and allows another student to copy it. In such cases, both students will be found to have committed academic misconduct. If both students submit the work, even at different times, both students will be deemed to have colluded and both will be penalised. Students who collude in an assessment will fail and usually they will be required to retake the module with attendance and pay the appropriate tuition fee to retake the module.

Remember: You will be guilty of collusion if you allow any of your academic work to be acquired by another student for presentation as if it were that student's own work, or if you submit another student's work passing it off as your own.

Avoiding Collusion

How can I avoid collusion and academic misconduct in online examinations?

This year, for examinations which are normally taken in strictly time-limited and invigilated conditions, without the use of books or internet resources, you will be taking them at home and with an additional time allowance. We expect you to behave in the same way as if you were in an examination hall. Therefore:

- You **must not discuss your examination questions with another student** until 24 hours after the start time of the examination. Some students may have a later finish time than you (in cases where a reasonable adjustment has been made).
- You should **complete the examination alone** in a quiet space, where possible.
- If you are currently living with another student sitting the same examination, you should avoid completing an exam whilst sitting alongside them as this may result in pressure being placed upon you if they are struggling with a particular answer. Remember, if you collude with another student, you will both have committed academic misconduct.
- You **should not be tempted to use the internet or other reference sources** to help with your answers

Please note that although you will submit your completed examination answers via Turnitin, there will not be any opportunity to check your work by running originality reports first. Once you have uploaded your answers, that will be your final submission. Late submissions will be penalised in the normal way.

In summary: we expect you to complete online examinations independently as if you were taking them in a formal examination hall. This means not discussing the examination questions with other students, and not sharing your work with other students.

Can I discuss my assignments (not exams) with other students?

You must remember the definition of collusion given above. If your tutor has encouraged you to discuss academic assignments (such as presentations) with other students on your course, as part of your learning and in preparing an assignment, then you may continue, provided this does not result in plagiarism.

If you are deferring one or more assignments from May to July, you will have more time to prepare your assignment/s, but even if you discuss it with others, you should still make sure it is your own work. If you submit your assignment work by the normal submission date you should not share it with other students.

Please note that students who submit in April/May and pass, will receive information on the grade achieved in the normal way, but feedback will not be available until after the July marking period is complete. This is to avoid students who choose to defer to July obtaining an unfair advantage by benefitting from feedback.

The only exception to this is that if you fail an assessment and need to resubmit (reassessment) we will provide the normal level of feedback and support to enable you to do this.

Managing academic misconduct

How is academic misconduct discovered?

The University uses a variety of means of identifying potential academic misconduct. In particular, when you submit assessment items, including examination papers, these are run through [Turnitin](#) which compares your work with anything similar on the internet or submitted by others and highlights where plagiarism or copying the work of others might have occurred. Lecturers use this to investigate more closely where they think that academic misconduct might have occurred. Also, of course, lecturers will see the work themselves and can identify cases where there is unusual similarity or any other cause for concern.

If staff suspect that work was not produced by the student who submitted it, the University's [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework](#) (paragraph 6.4) allows them to carry out an oral examination with you (this is also known as a viva) to test whether the answers given were really yours.

Academic misconduct can be checked by staff through consideration of Turnitin originality reports, and the use of oral examinations to test whether the work submitted is that of the student.

Being accused of academic misconduct

What happens if I am accused of academic misconduct?

Anyone suspected of academic misconduct is treated in accordance with the Procedures noted above. These Procedures are concerned with actions and not your intentions, so it is not an acceptable defence not to have “intended to do” something. If you are suspected of academic misconduct you will always be treated as innocent until a case has been both investigated and a conclusion as to whether such misconduct has taken place is reached.

As mentioned above, the Students’ Union provide a helpful [page on academic misconduct](#) where you can access independent help, advice and support.

What if I am found to have committed academic misconduct?

There are a number of penalties for committing academic misconduct, which are set out in full in the Procedures. In many cases your marks may be downgraded or you may be required to resubmit the assignment. In more serious cases you will lose academic credit which will make it more difficult to obtain your degree. In extreme circumstances you may be required to leave the University.

An allegation of academic misconduct if upheld can have very serious consequences. Penalties range from marks being downgraded, a requirement to resubmit the work or retake the module, through to being required to leave the University.

If you are doing an award which is endorsed by a professional body, such as Nursing, we may also have to tell that body that you have committed this offence. We may also need to include this in any reference you ask for in the future.

Suspecting others of academic misconduct

What should I do if I am concerned about the academic misconduct of other students?

If you have grounds for suspecting that another student is cheating, or otherwise guilty of academic misconduct, we advise you to speak in confidence to either your personal academic tutor or course leader in the first instance. You can also get advice and guidance from either [Student Complaints and Appeals staff](#) or the [Students Union Advice Service](#) (email to ask for a Skype meeting, or call 01905 543210).