Academic Misconduct - Frequently Asked Questions

What is academic misconduct?

University of South Wales Academic Misconduct Regulations define academic misconduct as:
'*any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member(s) of the academic community*'. This includes plagiarism, cheating, contract cheating, falsification, recycling work and collusion.

Developing your knowledge will often require you to consider the work of other academics and peers. For example, if you were analysing a famous work of art, or piece of music, it would make sense to find out what others have written about the subject, as well as forming your own opinions in order to develop and demonstrate your critical analysis skills. Understanding how to use the work of others, including your peers', to develop your own insights into a subject is an important professional skill. It is not, however, acceptable to use the work of others without the correct acknowledgement that you are doing so in the form of referencing.

In this context, 'work' is defined as words, ideas or creative output. This includes work that is published or unpublished and includes material from the internet. Therefore, whenever you include the work of others within your own work, you must always provide a reference to this. Correct referencing ensures that you acknowledge the original creators of the work and are using their work and opinions in an appropriate and ethical manner. During your studies, you will be expected to follow professional academic conventions and referencing styles (e.g. Harvard referencing). This skill will be taught as part of your course, and further information and guidance can also be found on the USW website here. Consequently, if you fail to reference correctly when submitting work, this could be considered either poor academic practice or, in more serious cases, as academic misconduct, for which there are penalties. These penalties could seriously affect your final results or degree classification. They can even impact on the possibility of staying on the course, as a consequence of severe incidents.

The main categories of academic misconduct are as follows:

- Plagiarism – taking someone else's work and passing it off as your own.
- Cheating – when you act dishonestly before / during / after an exam.

- Contract Cheating – e.g. asking someone else to write an assessment for you (usually by paying them) and submitting it as your own
- Falsification – making up/distorting data/evidence/results etc. and using this as part of an assessment
- Recycling – sometimes called 'self-plagiarism', when you submit work which you've already used before in another context
- Collusion – when you work with another student to produce work, or part of your work, and you each submit it as your individual work. This includes if you share your work with another student and it results in both of you submitting similar work, even if your intention was not for them to copy you (or vice versa). There are some instances where working together is allowed by your tutor and appropriate, but this would have been made very clear to you.

You can find further details on the different types of academic misconduct in the Academic Integrity Regulations and Academic Integrity Procedures.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Plagiarism can be defined as when you take someone else's work or ideas and pass them off as your own, without acknowledgement, for instance, through copying or unacknowledged paraphrasing.
- Presenting an assessment script as your own work when the script includes material produced by unauthorised means, or produced in collaboration with someone else, but you present it as your own individual work.
- Presenting work which has been produced by and/or bought from someone else and submitting it as your own.
- Introducing into an examination room any unauthorised form of materials such as a book, manuscript, data or loose papers, information obtained via an electronic device or any source of unauthorised information.
- Submitting a piece of work which includes falsified/fabricated data, evidence, references or results.

For a more complete list please consult the regulations here: Academic Misconduct and Academic Integrity - University of South Wales

What is Poor Academic Practice?

The University acknowledges that students may unintentionally commit academic misconduct through poor academic practice, especially when they are at the beginning of their first year and may not be as familiar with academic writing. Poor academic practice

occurs when students poorly prepare a piece of work for assessment. Repeated instances of poor academic practice may be treated as academic misconduct, as students are expected to learn from previous feedback and guidance.

Who is making the allegation of academic misconduct?

Depending on the nature of the allegation, it may have been the person marking your work, the Module Leader, the invigilator, or another member of staff, who has reason to believe that academic misconduct has taken place. Where possible, if any concerns have been raised about your work, your tutor or Module Leader will invite you to an exploratory meeting first to discuss these concerns.

What is the role of the Academic Integrity Officer (AIO)?

If you are suspected of having committed academic misconduct, an allegation form will be forwarded from your tutor / Module Leader to an Academic Integrity Officer. Academic Integrity Officers consider all allegations in the first instance during an initial review and confirm if a case exists on behalf of the University. You will be advised that the case has been referred and will be given the opportunity to submit a statement and evidence, within a set timeframe.

There are five options available to the Academic Integrity Officer:

- They can decide there is no case to answer, based on the evidence submitted.
- If they consider the case is an example of poor academic practice, you will be referred to the Learner Development Service. Where appropriate, your personal academic coach may be notified of the referral as well. You will not need to meet with the Academic Integrity Officer in this instance.
- If the Academic Integrity Officer considers that there is a potential case of academic misconduct, you will either be invited to an exceptional meeting, or will be given an initial decision, which you can accept or reject within a set timeframe. If you reject the decision, you will be invited to a meeting with the Academic Integrity Officer and will again be given the option to submit a written statement and evidence.
- If the Academic Integrity Officer decides that your potential case of academic misconduct is complex / more serious, your case may be referred directly to the Academic Integrity Panel.

The Academic Integrity Officer has **20 working days** from the date the allegation is raised with the Academic Registry team, to decide on the appropriate outcome. If the outcome is that your case is referred to the University Academic Integrity Panel, then this will be convened within a **further 20 working days** of the decision of the Academic Integrity Officer being communicated to you and your case being referred to the Panel.

If you have any questions about the process at this stage, you should contact the Academic Registry team via academic.integrity@southwales.ac.uk / or via the contact details in the communication you received.

What evidence do you have?

You will be sent copies of the allegation form and any evidence submitted with this form. This evidence will also be provided to the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel. Additional evidence may be presented to the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel on the day of the meeting, but only with the express permission of the Academic Integrity Officer / Chair of the Academic Integrity Panel. You will also be given copies of any additional evidence collected prior to any meeting.

I have been sent copies of a Turnitin Report; what is this?

Many courses request that students submit electronic copies of their assignment/ coursework/ dissertation through Turnitin software. This software produces a report, which can identify any matches with sources held within its database. Further information can be found here.

I have not used the source identified in the Turnitin Report / the report says I used work submitted by students at other universities, which I did not have access to.

The Turnitin software detects matching or similar text patterns in your work to the sources held on its database.

For example, the software may match your work to that of a student at another University who you have never had contact with. This may be explained by the fact that both you and the other student have used the same original source for your work. The important issue is whether the original source you have used has been acknowledged / referenced in your

work appropriately. If you have copies of the original sources you used, you should bring these with you to the hearing.

Do I have the right to present evidence?

Yes. You should inform the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel via the Academic Registry team as soon as possible if you wish to present evidence. Any additional evidence may be presented to the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel on the day of the meeting only with the express permission of the Academic Integrity Officer / Chair of the Academic Integrity Panel.

Please ensure that if your evidence is in a language other than English or Welsh that you also obtain a translation of the document.

Please note Academic Misconduct Regulation 3.9 states:

- Extenuating circumstances cannot be used as justification for breaching academic integrity.

However, 7.1.1 states that the University will consider evidence of mitigating factors when determining an appropriate penalty.

Do I have to attend the meeting with the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel?

No, you do not have to attend the meeting. However, due to the potential seriousness of the allegation you are strongly advised to attend and take the opportunity to present your case. If you do not wish to attend, you must inform the Academic Registry team via the email address academic.integrity@southwales.ac.uk, which is included in the correspondence you have previously received. You cannot send any other person to the meeting on your behalf. You can also submit a written statement, if you do not wish to attend the meeting.

What if I cannot attend on the date given?

If you wish to attend the meeting / hearing but are unable to attend on the given date, either in person or via a Teams meeting, then you can request a revised date. Please note that the meeting will only be rearranged once. You should advise the Academic Registry team at

least 48 hours in advance of the original meeting if you require a revised date. Meetings will typically be held online via Teams.

Will my case be heard if I do not attend?

Yes. If you have informed us that you do not wish / are not able to attend, or we have made every reasonable effort to contact you and you have not responded, the meeting will go ahead in your absence.

Can I bring someone with me to the meeting?

Yes, you can bring a Support Person with you to any discussions, meetings or hearings, for example a representative from the Students' Union, or if you prefer, you can bring a friend for moral support. You are asked to inform Academic Registry of the name of the person accompanying you as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours before the meeting. The role of the support person is to support you, not to represent, advocate, or speak on your behalf, unless prior approval has been granted.

Does the University provide interpreters for students whose first language is not English?

No, the University does not provide interpreters. The hearing will be conducted in English (or Welsh if requested).

Is there any support available for me?

Yes. The Students' Union is available to advise you and help you with your case; further information can be found on the Students' Union website (https://www.uswsu.com). Students may also seek support from the Advice Zone, which is located on each campus and can be contacted online (https://advice.southwales.ac.uk/). For further advice on the regulations/procedures, or for advice on the role of the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel meeting, you should contact the Academic Registry team via the email address that was in your initial letter.

Who else will be at the meeting and the hearing?

If you are invited to meet with an Academic Integrity Officer, they will be present along with yourself; anyone you bring with you for support; and a member of staff from the Academic Registry team, who will take notes of the meeting.

If you are invited to attend a hearing of the University Academic Integrity Panel, the Panel will be made up of two academic members of staff drawn from the Academic Misconduct Board and the President of the Students' Union (or nominee).

The person who raised the suspected academic misconduct case will also be invited to attend the Academic Integrity Panel meeting, normally the Module Leader. A member of the Academic Registry team will take notes of the meeting.

Who are the witnesses?

Witnesses may be invigilators or a member of academic staff from your school or subject area, or the Academic Integrity Officer who considered the case. You will be given an opportunity to question any witnesses who attend and they will leave the meeting after questioning.

Who calls the witnesses?

The Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel will organise their own witnesses. You are also permitted to call any witnesses to support your case. You must arrange for your own witnesses and inform the Academic Registry team of their names as soon as possible via the email address provided in communications to you.

What happens during the meeting/hearing?

Academic Integrity Officer meeting

The Academic Integrity Officer will explain why you have been invited to the meeting and invite you to respond to the allegation – i.e. do you accept the allegation or not? The Academic Integrity Officer will have sought information, if required, from the reporting tutor / Module Leader prior to meeting with you.

You will have received copies of any evidence presented to the Academic Integrity Officer ahead of the meeting.

You will be given an opportunity to comment on the evidence presented to the Academic Integrity Officer. You may also present any other evidence in advance of the meeting, or on

the day with the permission of the Academic Integrity Officer. When the questioning and submission of evidence has been completed, you will be asked to leave and the Academic Integrity Officer will consider the evidence. They will then decide whether the allegation has been substantiated and decide, in appropriate cases, the penalty to be imposed. You will be informed of the outcome in writing within 5 working days from the meeting. In some cases the Academic Integrity Officer may also choose to give an outcome verbally during the meeting if they believe that the case is straightforward and there is no need for further consideration. This is at the Academic Integrity Officer's discretion.

Academic Integrity Panel meeting

The Chair of the Academic Integrity Panel will explain why you have been invited to the meeting and invite you to respond to the allegation – i.e. do you accept the allegation or not? You will have received copies of any evidence presented to the Academic Integrity Panel ahead of the meeting.

The member of academic staff who raised the allegation will be invited to explain to the Panel why they have raised the allegation. The Chair of the Panel may also call witnesses, as they feel appropriate. You will then be given an opportunity to provide your perspective on the allegation by making a statement, by questioning witnesses or by calling your own witnesses. Witnesses will normally leave the meeting after being questioned.

You will also be given an opportunity to comment on the evidence presented to the Academic Integrity Panel. You may also present any other evidence with the permission of the Chair of the Academic Integrity Panel.

When the Panel has heard and seen all of the evidence, you will be asked to leave the meeting and the Panel will take time to consider everything that has been presented. The Panel will then decide whether the allegation has been substantiated and decide, where appropriate, the penalty to be imposed. You will be informed of the outcome in writing within 5 working days from the meeting.

Can I ask any questions?

Yes. If you have any questions during the hearing, either relating to the proceedings or to the case itself you may ask them. You may also question witnesses.

Will I be given the opportunity to explain what has happened?

Yes. You will be invited to give your account of what has happened.

Can I inform the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel of any extenuating circumstances which may have affected me?

Yes. You should inform the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel of any extenuating circumstances or personal circumstances which may be related to the academic misconduct. While it cannot be used as justification for committing academic misconduct; it may be considered as a mitigating factor in deciding a penalty (if applicable). Where possible, you should provide supporting documentation for your extenuating circumstances e.g. a medical certificate.

Where you could have reported such circumstances to the Academic Integrity Officer/ Integrity Misconduct Panel prior to their decision being made, those circumstances cannot subsequently be cited as grounds to request a review.

What are the possible outcomes?

The Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel will decide whether or not they believe that the allegation of academic misconduct is substantiated or whether they feel you have committed poor academic practice. In some instances, they may wish to defer a decision pending additional evidence.

When will I be informed of the outcome of the Panel?

You will be informed of the outcome in writing within **5 working days**. All students will be sent a letter via email by the Academic Registry team informing them officially of the outcome. In some instances, the Academic Integrity Officer / Panel may also provide the outcome to you verbally at the end of their meeting if they think that this is appropriate.

What happens if my case is unsubstantiated?

If the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel believes that the allegation is unsubstantiated, there will be no further action taken, and no record of the allegation will exist on your student record.

If my case is substantiated, how will this affect me?

If the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel believe that the allegation is substantiated, they will decide on the penalty to be imposed. The following are the options available to an Academic Integrity Officer [**0) to 3) only**] or Academic Integrity Panel [**0) - 6)**] and are based on the seriousness of the allegation:

0) Poor Academic Practice. The student will be referred to support services and will be required to complete the Academic Integrity module.
1) Issue a formal written warning as to future conduct. The warning will be retained on the student's personal record.
2) Cancel mark for the element of assessment – student must resubmit the work for the element – the whole module is capped at the base pass mark, but all other marks achieved in the module remain the same.
3) Cancel marks for the whole module – student must resubmit the work for all elements of assessment in order to pass the module – the module is capped at the base pass mark.
4) Cancel marks for the whole module – student must resubmit the work for all elements of assessment in order to pass the module – the module is capped at the base pass mark. All module marks for the stage (i.e. the academic year) are capped at the base pass mark.
5) Cancel all module marks for current stage – student is not allowed to repeat the year. The student is allowed to retain the credits already gained. The student is discontinued from their course but is eligible to apply for admission to a new course in accordance with the University's admissions regulations.
6) A recommendation is made to the Vice Chancellor (or nominee) that the student concerned be expelled. The student may be:
   i) expelled with credit – student is allowed to retain credits already gained; no further study at the University is allowed;
   ii) expelled without credit – all existing credit is revoked; no further study at the University is allowed.

In addition to any penalty decision made under 1) to 6) a student will also normally be referred to an appropriate referencing workshop or individual tutorial at the Learner Development Service.

You are advised to consult the Tariff of Penalties found in the Academic Integrity Regulations to see the exact implications of any penalties on your academic profile.

The University reserves the right to revoke an award or credits if it is discovered that academic misconduct was committed in order to gain the award.

What if I'm a student of a course governed by the Fitness to Practice Procedure?

In some cases this may affect your ability to practice in a particular profession (e.g. if you are a nursing student, the Head of Subject [or nominee] will decide whether to inform the professional body and whether you should be referred to the Fitness to Practice Procedure).

What if I'm studying an apprenticeship?

If you are an apprentice, any allegations made against you will follow the same procedure as all other USW students. However, your employer may be informed at the beginning / during / at the end of the procedure of the allegation and the outcome. In addition, your employer may also be invited to any meetings held with the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel, as an observer only. Apprentices may also be subject to an internal investigation by their employer in concurrence with, or subsequent to the University's own procedure. This will depend on the requirements of each course and/or employer.

Can I request a review of the decision?

You are entitled to submit a request for review following notification of the Academic Integrity Officer / Academic Integrity Panel outcome on the following grounds:

a) You have evidence that the procedures were not conducted in line with the regulations and this could cause reasonable doubt as to whether the same decision would have been reached had the issues not occurred.
b) That there has been an administrative error (for example, the notification of the penalty was not in line with the decision reached at the meeting or was recorded incorrectly on your record).
c) You can demonstrate that the penalty was disproportionate.

A request for review must be submitted within **10 working days** of notification of the outcome of the Academic Integrity Officer or Academic Integrity Panel, using the Suspected

Breach of Academic Integrity Request for Review Form, which is available at the following web link: Academic Misconduct and Academic Integrity

Requests for review will not be accepted unless they comply with the above requirements.