**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*’.

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 This includes work that is published or unpublished, and includes material from the internet.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](http://studentlibrary.southwales.ac.uk/referencing/). Consequently, if you fail to reference correctly when submitting work, this could be considered as academic misconduct, for which there are penalties, which could seriously affect your final results, degree classification or even the possibility of staying on the course in very serious incidents.

The main categories of academic misconduct are as follows:

* Intention to break the regulations
* Plagiarism
* Cheating
* Contract Cheating
* Falsification
* Recycling
* Collusion

Examples include, but are not limited to:

* 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;
* Copying from or communicating with any other person in the examination room, except as authorised by an invigilator;
* Communicating electronically with any other person;
* Impersonating an examination candidate or allowing oneself to be impersonated;
* Presenting evidence of special circumstances to examination boards which is false or falsified or which in any way misleads or could mislead examination boards;
* Presenting an assessment script as your own work when the script includes material produced by unauthorised means. This includes plagiarism;
* Plagiarism can be defined as using another person’s work without acknowledgement and submitting it for assessment as though it were one’s own work, for instance, through copying, unacknowledged paraphrasing or collusion.

For a more complete list please consult the [regulations](http://uso.southwales.ac.uk/StudentCasework/AI/).

**I have received a letter informing me that there is an allegation of academic misconduct against me; what does this mean?**

This means that you are suspected of having committed academic misconduct. A report has been forwarded to an academic misconduct officer within your faculty who has determined that, based on the evidence submitted, a *prima facie* case (i.e. a case based on what seems to be the truth when first seen or heard) has been established against you. The academic misconduct officer considers all allegations and confirms if a case exists on behalf of the University.

The academic misconduct officer will then determine whether they can consider your case or if it should be referred straight to the University Academic Misconduct Panel.

If the academic misconduct officer can consider your case, they have **20 working days** from the date the allegation is raised, to meet with you to decide on the appropriate outcome. If the outcome is that your case is referred to the University Academic Misconduct Panel, then this will be convened within **20 working days** of the decision of the academic misconduct officer being communicated to you.

If you have any questions about the process at this stage, you should contact Academic Registry via the email address detailed in the letter you received.

**Who is making the allegation of academic misconduct?**

Depending on the nature of the allegation, it may have been made by an invigilator, the person marking your work or another member of staff who has reason to believe that academic misconduct has taken place.

**What evidence do you have?**

You will be sent copies of any evidence submitted with the letter informing you of the allegation. This evidence will also be provided to the academic misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct Panel. Additional evidence may be presented to the academic misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct Panel on the day of the meeting, but only with the express permission of the academic misconduct officer/Chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel. You will also be given copies of any additional evidence.

**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.

**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 may 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. 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 misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct Panel as soon as possible if you wish to present evidence. Any additional evidence may be presented to the academic misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct Panel on the day of the meeting only with the express permission of the academic misconduct officer/Chair of the Academic Misconduct 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 2.4 states:

* Extenuating circumstances cannot be used as justification for committing academic misconduct.

**However, extenuating circumstances may be taken into account when deciding on a penalty.**

**Do I have to attend the meeting with the academic misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct Panel?**

No, you do not have to attend the meeting. However, due to the 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 Academic Registry via the email address included in the correspondence you have previously received. You cannot send any other person to the meeting on your behalf. If you do not wish to attend the meeting, you can submit a written statement.

**What if I cannot attend on the date given?**

If you wish to attend the hearing but are not able to on the given date either in person or via Skype, then, in exceptional circumstances an allowance may be made for one postponement. You should advise the University at least 48 hours in advance of the original meeting if you require a revised date. If you would like to request that the meeting takes place over Skype please advise Academic Registry of this via the details provided in the letter to you.

**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 representation from the Students’ Union, or if you prefer, you can bring a friend or staff member for moral support. The regulations allow you to bring a friend or representative to the meeting, as long as the person with you is not attending in a legal capacity. You are asked to inform Academic Registry of the name of the person accompanying you as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours before the meeting.

**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), however, if you have any language difficulties you may arrange for someone to accompany you who can interpret for you.

**Is there any support available for me?**

Yes. The Students’ Union is available to advise you and help you with your case; they are located in the Students’ Union building. Students may also seek support from the Advice Zone, which is located on each campus and also can be contacted online. For advice on the regulations or the academic misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct Panel meeting, you should contact Academic Registry via the details provided in the letter to you.

**Who else will be at the meeting and the hearing?**

If you are invited to meet with an academic misconduct officer, they will be present along with yourself, anyone you bring with you for support, and a member or nominee of Academic Registry, who will take notes of the meeting.

If you are invited to attend a hearing with the University Academic Misconduct 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 meeting; normally the module leader. A member of Academic Registry will take notes of the meeting.

Witnesses may also be called to present evidence.

**Who are the witnesses?**

Witnesses may be invigilators or a member of academic staff from your school or subject area. 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 misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct 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 Academic Registry of their names as soon as possible via the email address provided in the letter to you.

**What happens during the meeting/hearing?**

***Academic misconduct officer meeting***

The academic misconduct 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 misconduct officer will have sought information, if required, from the module leader prior to meeting with you.

You will have received copies of any evidence presented to the academic misconduct officer, but you will be given an opportunity to see any other evidence referred to by the academic misconduct officer during the course of the meeting.

You will be given an opportunity to comment on the evidence presented to the academic misconduct officer. You may also present any other evidence with the permission of the academic misconduct officer. When the questioning and submission of evidence has been completed, you will be asked to leave and the academic misconduct 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.

***Academic Misconduct Panel meeting***

The Chair of the Academic Misconduct 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 Misconduct Panel, but you will be given an opportunity to see any other evidence referred to by the Academic Misconduct Panel during the course 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 and may call witnesses, as they feel appropriate. The member of academic staff who raised the allegation may question you as well as any witnesses they may call. 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 leave the meeting after being questioned.

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

When the panel have 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.

**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 misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct Panel of any extenuating circumstances which may have affected me?**

Yes. You should inform the academic misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct 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 used in deciding a penalty. You should provide supporting documentation e.g. a medical certificate.

Where you could have reported such circumstances to the academic misconduct officer/ Academic 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 misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct 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?**

The academic misconduct officer/Chair of the Academic Misconduct Panel will inform you at the start of the meeting whether they will tell you the result on the same day by asking you back once a decision has been made, or whether you will be informed in writing within **5 working days**. All students will be sent a letter by Academic Registry informing them officially of the outcome.

**What happens if my case is unsubstantiated?**

If the academic misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct 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 misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct 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 Misconduct Officer [a) – b) only] or Academic Misconduct Panel [a) - f)] and are based on the seriousness of the allegation:

a) Issue a formal written warning as to future conduct. The warning will be retained on the student’s personal record.

b) 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.

c) 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.

d) 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.

e) 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.

f) 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 a) to d) a student may also be referred to an appropriate referencing workshop or individual tutorial at the Student Development and Study Skills Service.

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.

In some cases this may affect your ability to practice in a particular profession (e.g. if you are a law student, the head of school will decide whether to inform the professional body).

**Can I appeal against the decision?**

You are entitled to submit a request for review following notification of the academic misconduct officer/Academic Misconduct 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).

The grounds under which a request for review against expulsion may be made are as above and, in addition:

c) That the original penalty imposed was excessive.

A request for review must be submitted within **10 working days** of notification of the outcome of the academic misconduct officer or Academic Misconduct Panel using the Academic Misconduct Request for Review Form which is available [here](http://uso.southwales.ac.uk/StudentCasework/AI/).

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

**What happens if I do not have grounds to request a review but I am unhappy with the decision?**

If you feel that you have no grounds for submission of a request for review but feel that you have grounds to complain about the decision reached, you will need to request a Completion of Procedures Letter from the Student Casework Unit. This will confirm that the University's procedures have been exhausted and allow you access to the student complaints scheme of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

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