

ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND PRACTICE HANDBOOK

Chapter 2 – Definitions and Categories of Academic Misconduct

1. Offences and Definitions

- 1.1 An academic offence is defined as an act or failure to act that if undetected gives, or aims to give, an advantage over other students, or any behaviour which may deceive those setting, administering and marking a piece of work. Academic offences can take number of forms (please note that the examples listed alongside each offence are intended to be illustrative and are not exhaustive):

a. **Plagiarism**, i.e. the act of representing work or ideas as one's own without appropriate acknowledgement or referencing. For instance:

- i. Direct copying of text, or illustrations, from a book, article, fellow student's essay, handout, thesis, web page, AI-generated content, or other source (including a source originally in another language) without proper acknowledgement.
- ii. Claiming individual ideas derived from a book, article etc. as one's own, and incorporating them into one's work without properly acknowledging the source of those ideas. This includes, among many other things, insufficiently paraphrasing a source, or altering the material taken from the source so it appears to be one's own work, or mirroring the structure of the argument of another writer without correct attribution.
- iii. Overly depending on the work of others by constructing a significant part of an assessment by extracting large sections of text from another source. This could include copying another's bibliography and referencing, implying the research completed is the student's own.
- iv. Self-plagiarism: the re-submission or re-use of the student's own work in another assignment whether this was submitted at the University of Exeter or any other academic institution worldwide without citing the previous work. (This is not intended to prevent a student from developing an academic idea over the course of their studies, for example stating an argument in an essay for a particular

module and then developing this argument in a dissertation, but to prevent the counting of credit twice for the same piece of work, or sections of work, however this operates at the discretion of the Panel considering the offence).

- b. **Misrepresentation**, i.e. misrepresenting work as your own, in whole or part. An example may include misrepresenting the authorship and / or academic competence of the work through the use of paraphrasing tools; translation tools, an AI-generated source, a translator or other third-party.
- c. **Collusion**, i.e. the unauthorised working with another person(s), whether in person or via electronic device, on a piece of work, which is then submitted as part of an assessment, without acknowledgement of the other person's contribution. If a student decides to share material with another student, this is considered an offence, even if they appear not to have gained an advantage for themselves, as they have facilitated the gaining of an advantage for another.
- d. **Coercion**, i.e. where a student puts pressure on another student or member of staff to act in a particular way, or attempts to do so, with the intention of gaining an academic advantage. Where this is initially investigated as collusion it will be possible for the offence(s), outcomes and penalties applied to differ between the parties involved. It is also possible for an outcome to be reached for one party ahead of the final outcome for the student alleged to have coerced another.
- e. **Fabrication**, i.e. the creation of false data or other aspects of research or assessed work, including but not limited to documentation and participant consent forms. The inclusion of fabricated references.
- f. **Falsification**, i.e. the inappropriate manipulations and/or selection of data imagery and/or consents, or use of hidden characters (white text) within the work which may have been included to manipulate the word count, to avoid source matches or to otherwise mislead the marker.
- g. **Contract Cheating**, i.e. a student requesting a third-party to complete an assessment, or part of an assessment, on their behalf, which involves an exchange, for example, but not limited to, money, goods or services.

- h. The **use or possession of unauthorised books, notes, software, electronic devices or other materials** in an examination or assessment. This includes material obtained from essay sites, also known as 'Essay Mills'.
- i. **Obtaining or sharing an examination paper or assessment question** ahead of its authorised release. Or obtaining or sharing another student's answer to an examination paper.
- j. **Impersonation or attempted impersonation of another individual**, due to be sitting a specific assessment.

Note: Evidence of an attempt to disguise or conceal any of the offences listed above will normally be treated more severely than that which is deemed to be unintentional.

- 1.2 Faculties (or delegated Schools) **may** extend these definitions for specific subject areas and provide students with examples as appropriate. The correct referencing system for making quotations used within assessed work **should** be indicated in the Faculty/Department handbook, alongside a link to the university approved Referencing Guidance. Clarification **should** be available from Academic Tutors (also known as Personal Tutors) , as well as through induction sessions within the Faculty/Department. Students are responsible for ensuring they reference correctly, in accordance with the referencing style chosen by the department in which the assessment was set. Lack of awareness of the referencing conventions will not be deemed an excuse for academic offences.
- 1.3 Throughout this Handbook an **examination** is defined as an assessment within a formal examination room, subject to invigilation and a fixed time period for the candidate to complete the required work.
- 1.4 Throughout this Handbook, a piece of **coursework** is defined as any assessed work which is not an examination. The term coursework applies equally to formative and summative work.
- 1.5 Any other assessment such as timed exams undertaken in non-invigilated conditions, will be seen under the procedures outlined for the consideration of coursework, not the procedures for examinations.

1.6 Throughout this Handbook at formal meetings reference is made to the **Student's Supporter**. The Student's Supporter will normally be a member of the University, or Students Guild /Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union and the role is defined as follows:

- The Supporter is there to provide moral support to the student and to support the student with asking and answering questions during the meeting. They may also take notes of the meeting for the Student. The Student is expected to speak from themselves, and there is no automatic right for the Supporter to address the Committee. Should a Supporter act beyond this definition, then the Chair **may** suspend the meeting and ask the Supporter to leave, in the event that the Student is unable to continue the meeting in the absence of the Supporter, then the meeting will continue in the absence of the Student, based on the verbal evidence heard to date and the written documentation. Should the Supporter be asked to leave this meeting, this will not affect the attendance of others at the meeting such as the marker, any witness or Faculty Representative.

1.7 A **witness** is a person who can testify their knowledge of a matter that is under investigation. A witness may not be called to provide a character reference, nor would they be able to act as the Student's Supporter, as described in section 1.6 above, within the meeting. A witness can be called by the Panel or Committee or by the Student. A witness may attend a meeting to testify about what they witnessed in respect of the matter under investigation, or as an expert in the subject matter of the assignment(s) being discussed in the meeting. At the discretion of the Chair of the Panel, a witness may direct questions to the Student. A witness will answer questions put to them by the Panel, Committee and Student. A witness would not usually attend for the entirety of the meeting and would not be entitled to know the outcome of any proceedings in which they had given testimony.

2. Categories of Academic Misconduct

2.1 The University has developed three levels of severity for such offences, determining what category an offence falls into is an exercise of academic judgement. Where an offence is identified, then the Faculty Cases Team or the University Cases Team must ensure that it is correctly categorised. There are three categories:

- a. **Poor academic practice.**
- b. **Academic misconduct.**
- c. **Severe academic misconduct.**

2.2 Poor Academic Practice

2.2.1 Poor academic practice may arise from lack of understanding of academic protocols or a misunderstanding of expected academic conventions of the Department.

2.2.2 It would not be acceptable to consider a case as 'poor academic practice' where either of the following conditions applies:

- a. There is any indication that the student intended to gain an unfair advantage or had the intention to deceive the marker.
- b. The student had already been found guilty of a similar offence in a similar assessment and could therefore be reasonably expected to have familiarised themselves with the academic practice of the Department.

2.2.3 Poor academic practice cases are handled at Faculty/Department level and may involve either a formal meeting with the student or student attendance at a workshop.

2.3 Academic Misconduct

2.3.1 Academic misconduct involves behaviour which, if not detected, would have deceived those setting, administering and marking the coursework and/or could have obtained advantage on the part of the student, or another student.

2.3.2 Academic misconduct cases are normally handled at Faculty level.

2.4 Severe Academic Misconduct

2.4.1 Severe academic misconduct may be a second offence, or involve evidence of extensive plagiarism or cheating, or clear evidence of behaviour which is designed to deceive those setting, administering and marking the assessment and/or behaviour designed to obtain advantage on the part of the student. Examples include:

- a. Taking notes into or using any unauthorised device in an examination.
- b. Impersonating another person during an examination or arranging for another person to impersonate any individual during an examination.
- c. An assignment that includes extensive, or otherwise significant quantity, of unattributed or incorrectly attributed copying.
- d. Any case where a student has previously been penalised for a significant amount of Academic Misconduct and are being referred for a second significant offence.
- e. The use by a student of essay sites that may involve a commercial transaction, with or without the author's consent.
- f. Misconduct within a dissertation or thesis of a taught postgraduate programme. Owing to the level of study, this would normally be placed within this category.
- g. Where the Faculty suspects that any of the underlying data used by the student has been either falsified or fabricated.

2.4.2 Suspected severe academic misconduct cases should be initially investigated by the Faculty (or delegated School) and referred to the University level at the Senior Academic Conduct Officer's (SACO) discretion.