

## QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 23: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND MISCONDUCT

### INTRODUCTION

This policy and procedure applies to all students of the University and therefore all taught programmes and modules offered at Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels. It is also applicable to students undertaking an Arden University programme through a collaborative or partnership provider.

1. The aim of this policy is to ensure that:
  - i. Cases of suspected academic misconduct are dealt with openly and fairly.
  - ii. Appropriate penalties and sanctions are imposed for proven cases of academic misconduct.
  - iii. Academic Integrity is promoted across the University and issues relating to this are responded to appropriately to minimise the risk of academic misconduct.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

2. Academic integrity is about fairness and honesty in the assessment process and mastering the art of scholarship. Scholarship involves researching, understanding and building upon the works of others and requires that students give credit where it is due and acknowledge the contributions of others to their own intellectual efforts. Where a student does not act with Academic Integrity, their work may demonstrate poor academic practice, or it may represent academic misconduct.

### ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

3. **Academic Misconduct** is any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community.
4. Academic Misconduct includes cheating, attempts to cheat, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, falsifying data, commissioning of assessment writing to a third-party writing service (including artificial intelligence), and violation of research ethics. It is wrong and unacceptable, not least because it is dishonest, and it undermines the value of the qualification that students are pursuing.
5. Examples of academic misconduct are provided below. This list of examples is not exhaustive and does not limit the general nature of the definition of academic misconduct. Other actions may fall within the general definition of academic misconduct.
  - i. Infringements of examination regulations, for example, but not limited to; the introduction of prohibited material into the examination; copying from or any communication with any other person during the examination that has not been

- authorised by an invigilator, the impersonation of an examination candidate or allowing oneself to be impersonated.
- ii. Plagiarism, which is the use without proper acknowledgement of another person's words and presenting it in an assessment as if they were one's own. Plagiarism includes copying from another student, copying from published work (including online learning materials, lecturer notes, books, internet sites, journal articles, case studies, computer code, artefacts, images etc.).
  - iii. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of previously submitted work from other modules or programmes (not limited to Arden) and any other similar practice, including the reuse and submission of the same piece of work for two or more different purposes.
  - iv. Collusion, which includes work that is undertaken collaboratively by two or more people and is submitted as if it were the work of a single person; the submission of one student's work as if it were the work of another student; where a student makes their work available to another student to copy; where a student copies another's work with or without the other person's knowledge. It should be noted that in collusion cases, both or all parties can be at fault even if the collusion takes place without the knowledge of the original author of the work. It is distinct from contract cheating for the purpose of this policy as collusion does not depend on a fee being paid for the work.
  - v. Contracting, paid or otherwise, of others to produce the work (ghost writing). This includes the use of known essay writing services and/or other agencies and the use of any other party including artificial intelligence in the production of some, or all the work.
  - vi. Falsifying data, including but not limited to, fabricated authorisation letters, making false claims to have carried out research, observations, surveys, interviews, distorted research outcomes, fabricated participant consent or other forms of data collection and analysis.
  - vii. Misconduct in relation to research, including but not limited to, failure to obtain appropriate ethical approval for the research conducted.
  - viii. Deliberate attempts to disguise the content of an assessment, including but not limited to, the use of presenting text as an image, or other means used to disguise part or all the assessment.
  - ix. Deliberate misrepresentation of wordcount within assessments.
6. Allegations of suspected assessment misconduct identified prior to submission of summative assessment will be considered in accordance with QA60 Student Disciplinary Procedure.
7. The following examples of poor academic referencing are **not** considered to be evidence of academic misconduct and would not normally require referral for further investigation. However, it is expected that markers reflect poor academic practice in the grade allocated and when providing feedback (see also point 13)

Vast majority work is students own but there are small sections of written work that are unattributed and make no reference to other sources but have not been identified by Turnitin as matching previously published work.

Poor expression and structure and lack of clarity in the writing.

Reliance on a small number of sources but low similarity match in the Turnitin report.

Failure to consistently apply standard referencing technique.

Significant use of direct quotations from sources that are acknowledged in the text and reference list.

Some typographical or other errors in the reference list.

Submissions which have a high overall percentage match with previously published work on Turnitin should not automatically be referred for further investigation. The nature of the match should be investigated to see how it constructed.

#### **OFFENCE OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

8. A student is guilty of academic misconduct if acting alone or with other(s) gains or attempts to gain credit or advantage in an assessment by improper means:
  - i. A student commits the offence of academic misconduct, gaining advantage or credit or attempting to gain advantage or credit for him/herself or another.
  - ii. The student's intent in committing the actions which amount to academic misconduct is immaterial and will not be considered by the Academic Misconduct Panel when determining whether the student is guilty of academic misconduct.
  - iii. The student's intent in committing the actions which amount to academic misconduct will if relevant be considered by the Panel in determining appropriate penalty or action.
9. Cases of academic misconduct are treated extremely seriously. Students found guilty of committing an academic misconduct offence will be penalised. Penalties are detailed in Section 27.

#### **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

10. Students are required to submit their assignments electronically via the online submission portal. It is Arden University's policy to systematically scan assessment submissions received in this way by use of the Turnitin plagiarism detection system. There is no set acceptable Turnitin score; work with lower Turnitin scores may still be referred if there is any doubt over the originality of the work. In addition, markers and examiners are expected to be vigilant in detecting academic misconduct in assessment.
11. For programmes delivered in languages other than English, alternative plagiarism detection software or systems may be used.

12. Students can submit a draft of their work to Turnitin in advance of the assessment deadline and are strongly encouraged to use this function developmentally before making their final submission.
13. Where an internal marker, external examiner, or any other individual involved in the assessment of students suspects, during or after the assessment and marking process, including following the ratification of grades and/or prior or following the award of a qualification, that a student has committed academic misconduct which is not considered to be a minor level offence as outlined in section 28, this must be referred for further investigation with details of the evidence that gave rise to this suspicion.
14. Cases of poor academic practice are not considered as academic misconduct offences and should be addressed by the marker within the written feedback, and marked in accordance with normal procedures, taking into consideration lack of originality within the grading.
15. In cases where it is suspected that the production of the assessment has been commissioned to a third party, supporting evidence could include:
  - meta-data captured from within the submitted document (for example, the properties of a Word document may identify the author as being different from the student)
  - samples of the student's normal writing style
  - evidence of the submission to an essay mill
  - evidence from Turnitin where applicable
  - notes from a viva voce examination conducted as part of the evidence collection process (see section 17)

In the case that a marker reports an allegation of academic misconduct as above, the student's work in question must nonetheless be marked and awarded a grade on its own merit taking into account any lack of originality and produce feedback that takes account of the work in its entirety, irrespective of the allegation. This grade and feedback would stand in the case that a student is cleared of academic misconduct.

16. Invigilators suspecting academic misconduct in examinations will act in accordance with the relevant examination regulations and will make a report of the allegation in the invigilator's report and append any supporting evidence to their report.
17. Allegations raised during the marking stage will be initially reviewed by an Academic Integrity Officer to determine whether a formal allegation will be made against a student.

#### **VIVA VOCE MEETINGS**

18. Where there are concerns regarding the authenticity of work such as suspected commissioning of the assessment (e.g., ghost writing or use of essay mills, use of AI to produce work) or falsification of data, the student may be asked to attend a viva voce meeting to demonstrate their authorship.
19. The date and time of the Viva Voce meeting will be provided along with full instructions for attendance and details of what they may expect as part of the process. The student may be accompanied by a friend, relative or student representative. If an agreeable date for the meeting cannot be arranged with the student within 10 working days, or if the student fails to attend without good cause or prior notification, the case will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Panel and a decision may be made based on the evidence provided.
20. The Viva Voce meeting will be conducted by an academic subject expert (normally the person raising the concern) and one other academic staff member independent from the allegation who will act as chair. The chair should ensure that the viva is conducted in a collegiate manner and that the student is treated fairly. During the meeting, students will be given the opportunity to explain their work and questions may be posed in respect of sources, ideas and theories presented within the work. Minutes of the meeting will be taken by the Quality nominee.
21. The Viva Voce meeting is not the point at which the outcome of the investigation is decided but will be used to gather evidence to present as part of any formal allegation and investigation by the Academic Misconduct Panel. Once the meeting is concluded, if concerns remain, a formal allegation will be made and referred to the Academic Misconduct Panel. The student will be issued with further instructions as detailed within section 22.

#### **ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT PANEL**

22. All instances of alleged academic misconduct will be collated by a nominee of the Quality team who will be responsible for convening an Academic Misconduct Panel to hear and investigate the allegations and to determine any penalties to be applied. The Academic Misconduct Panel will normally comprise the Quality nominee, who will act as secretary and take minutes of the proceedings, and two academic staff members including an Academic Integrity Officer who will act as Chair. Where deemed appropriate, an independent person may be appointed as an additional member of the Panel.
23. Students will be issued with individual letters detailing the nature of the allegation being made against them and inviting them to provide a formal response either in writing, by telephone or in person to the Academic Misconduct Panel. A link to the Academic misconduct procedure will be included in the email. Letters will normally be issued at least 7 days in advance of the scheduled meeting of the Academic Misconduct Panel.

- 24.** Students wishing to attend the Academic Misconduct Panel in person may be accompanied by a friend, adviser or representative who may speak on their behalf. They cannot be accompanied by a professional (e.g. solicitor or barrister) acting on their behalf in a professional capacity.
- 25.** Students will be required to inform the Quality Team via [upresponses@arden.ac.uk](mailto:upresponses@arden.ac.uk) whether they intend to make a verbal response or provide a written response to the allegation or not. Students who are being accompanied by a friend, adviser or representative must inform the Quality nominee of the name of the person in writing in advance of the meeting. Every reasonable attempt will be made to obtain a response from the student and the Academic Misconduct Panel will not normally hear a case for which no acknowledgement of the allegation has been received from the student, or without the student being fully informed that their case will be heard without their response. If, however, a student does not attend the meeting of the Academic Misconduct Panel, having previously indicated that they would attend, and providing all reasonable attempts have been made to contact the student, the meeting shall proceed in their absence.

Cases of collusion will normally be heard separately, however students who choose to attend the Academic Misconduct Panel meeting may request that their case be heard jointly.

- 26.** The terms of reference of the Academic Misconduct Panel are:
- i. To consider the evidence on which the allegation of academic misconduct is based;
  - ii. To determine whether the allegation has been substantiated;
  - iii. Where a case has been substantiated, to determine the penalty or action to be imposed;
  - iv. To record observations and outcomes that may be used to inform staff training, assessment design, process and practice or any other outcome that would benefit from further investigation and reporting.
- 27.** The following procedures apply to meetings of the Academic Misconduct Panel:
- i. The chair or other member of the Panel will present the case against the student and the evidence on which the case is based.
  - ii. If the student is in attendance, in person or by telephone, the panel may question the student during the presentation of evidence.
  - iii. Once the presentation of evidence is complete, all persons, excluding the panel members, shall withdraw, and the committee shall consider whether the allegation has been substantiated.
  - iv. If the panel finds that the case has been substantiated, it shall then consider the penalty or action to be imposed.
  - v. If the panel finds that the case is not substantiated but the panel finds that the infraction goes beyond poor references as outlined in paragraph 14, then the panel can make a finding of poor academic practice and consider imposition of an action.

## **ACTIONS AND PENALTIES**

- 28.** The table on page 12 provides guidance on the course of action and application of penalties for different levels of offences.
- 29.** Where students present evidence of extenuating circumstances during the investigation process, such evidence will not supersede the decision regarding academic misconduct. However, in exceptional cases, if the Academic Misconduct Panel deems it appropriate to take circumstances into account when determining the appropriate course of action, these should be brought to the attention of the Academic Registrar and Head of School for consideration.



Category	Examples	Recommended Penalties
Moderate	<p>Majority of assessment is students' own, but there is a significant proportion that is not the work of the student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large sections of unoriginal content copied from another source</li> <li>• Large sections of poorly paraphrased content</li> <li>• Large sections matching to the submission of another student which suggests an inappropriate level of sharing of work</li> </ul> <p>Unauthorised use of significant proportions of work previously submitted as part of another assessment for which credit has been awarded (self-plagiarism)</p>	<p>Formal warning that will be considered in any subsequent offences</p> <p>Completion of ASSIST and/ or referral Academic Skills Tutor</p> <p>Award mark of zero for assessment. Reassessment if permitted capped at pass mark</p>
Major	<p>Majority of work is not the student's own:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of assessment copied from another source</li> <li>• Majority of work copied from another student</li> <li>• Use of AI to produce large sections of content</li> </ul>	<p>Formal warning that will be considered in any subsequent offences. Repeated major offence will be deemed as extremely serious offence.</p> <p>Completion of ASSIST and/ or referral Academic Skills Tutor</p>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Falsifying data</li> </ul> <p>Ethical breaches</p>	<p>Award mark of zero for assessment. Reassessment if permitted capped at pass mark</p>
Extremely Serious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commissioning the writing of the assessment to a third-party writing service</li> <li>Use of AI to produce assessment in its entirety</li> <li>Impersonation in an examination or presentation</li> <li>Serious ethical breaches</li> <li>The use of unauthorised materials in an examination</li> <li>Repeated major offence following previously confirmed major offence</li> </ul>	<p>Final warning (any further major or extremely serious offences will result in exclusion from the University)</p> <p>Permanent exclusion from the University (where it is a repeated major or extremely serious offence)</p>

- 30.** Following the Academic Misconduct Panel, the following actions will be undertaken:
- i. A letter will be issued to students notifying them of the outcome of the Academic Misconduct Panel and informing them of any penalty or action that has been imposed, if applicable.
  - ii. The Quality nominee will record outcomes on the student's record and any cancellation of grade will also be recorded.
  - iii. The outcomes of the Academic Misconduct Panel will be presented to the next meeting of the Subject Assessment Board, where these outcomes will be formally received and ratified.
  - iv. Where the penalty determined by the Academic Misconduct Panel is exclusion, the student will be presented to the Progression and Award Board for formal withdrawal. Grades and/or awards achieved prior to the exclusion will normally stand unless there is clear and compelling evidence to demonstrate that credits should be removed. In such cases, the University reserves the right to retrospectively review previously ratified work.
  - v. The decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel is final and there shall be no further discussion of the details of the case with the student following the Academic Misconduct Panel meeting. The student does, however, have the right of appeal as detailed in Section 30.
  - vi. Students that are issued with informal or a formal warning must complete the university's ASSIST – module. Access to all active modules may be suspended until ASSIST has been successfully completed.
  - vii. Allegations of academic misconduct which involve fraud or a serious breach of examination security and implicate the Head of Centre or senior management will be reported to the Academic Registrar and will be investigated accordingly.
  - viii. Confirmed cases of Academic misconduct may be reported to professional bodies where applicable.

## **APPEALS**

- 31.** Students whose allegation of academic misconduct has been substantiated have the right to appeal against the decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel. Student appeals must be made in writing and in accordance with the QA 24 Academic Appeals policy.

## **Outcomes**

- During the investigation of academic misconduct allegations, issues and observations may arise that would benefit from further investigation or action. These may impact on future academic practice, staff development or University processes and procedures.
- Key themes will be discussed during the committee and summarised by the secretary. The AIO will provide a report to the next available Course Committee and action required at a programme level will be generated and captured within the programme team's Annual Rolling Action Plan.

An overarching report with a summary of outcomes and key themes arising will be presented to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee on a quarterly basis and will form part of the annual report to Academic Board.

Policy Name:	Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy
Policy Reference:	QA23
Approval Authority:	Academic Framework, Regulation and Policy Committee
Last Approved:	October 2024 (effective from 23 <sup>rd</sup> December 2024)
Responsible SMT Lead:	Academic Registrar
Responsible Department:	Academic Affairs
Policy Contact:	Joanne Walker, Head of Quality ( <a href="mailto:jwalker@arden.ac.uk">jwalker@arden.ac.uk</a> )
Review Frequency:	3 years