

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON POLICY ON TACKLING ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University considers seriously all acts of academic misconduct, which by definition are dishonest and in direct opposition to the values of a learning community. Academic misconduct, if not challenged, will ultimately devalue academic standards and honest effort on the part of all students.

Academic Misconduct is a matter for students and staff together –

- It is the responsibility of all students to demonstrate both a level of independent thinking and the provision of clear referencing to all sources consulted.
- It is the responsibility of academic schools to provide detailed guidance and academic study skills support alongside awareness and detection methods in all aspects of teaching, assessment and feedback.
- It is the responsibility of the University to provide institutional support to both students and staff alongside a clear policy and regulatory framework for a consistent approach to preventing, detecting and dealing with Academic Misconduct.

Defining Academic Misconduct:

Cheating –

Cheating is defined as any attempt to gain unfair advantage in an assessment by dishonest means, and includes e.g. cheating in an examination, stealing another student's work, commissioning of an assessment from a third party, impersonation of another student.

This is not an exhaustive list and other common examples of cheating would include –

- Being in possession of “crib notes” during an examination
- Copying from the work of another student
- Prohibited communication during an examination
- Unauthorised use of electronic devices
- Acts of plagiarism or collusion as defined below

Collusion -

Collusion is when two or more people combine to produce a piece of work for assessment that is passed off as the work of one student alone. The work may be so alike in content, wording and structure that the similarity goes beyond what might have been coincidence. For example – where one student has copied the work of another, or where a joint effort has taken place in producing what should have been an individual effort, including preparation for a seen examination.

Collusion should not be confused with the normal situation in which students learn from one another, sharing ideas and group work to complete assignments (where this is specifically authorised).

Plagiarism –

Plagiarism is the act of taking someone else's work and passing it off as your own. This includes incorporating either unattributed direct quotation(s) or substantial paraphrasing from the work of another/others/or yourself.

It is important to cite all sources whose work has been drawn on and reference them fully in accordance with the referencing standard used in each academic school.

The most common forms of plagiarism are –

- Cut or copied and pasted materials from websites
- Copying the work of another student (past or present) including essays available through “essay bank” websites – or other data.
- Copying material from a text book or journal
- Self Plagiarism¹

Support for Students:

The University, through its academic staff, will be both sympathetic and supportive in preventing plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, particularly in the first year of undergraduate study.

It is the responsibility of academic staff and the institution to provide clear support and detailed guidance for the prevention of misunderstood academic misconduct through –

- The availability of academic support and counselling.
- The provision of guidance at induction on concepts and forms of academic misconduct – to be reinforced throughout the academic year.
- The development of students referencing skills throughout the duration of their academic studies.
- Each School should provide written guidance to students at induction on subject-specific conventions and how to reference work properly.
- The availability of published guidance on how to avoid academic misconduct.
- The availability of independent study skills guidance through study support staff and on-line guidance materials.
- Where group work is a prescribed assessment component teaching staff must make additional efforts to underline the boundaries between collaboration and collusion.
- The identification of vulnerable groups, for special attention and guidance – including international students.

It is the responsibility of all students to ensure that they understand the regulations and conventions for proper academic referencing and where concerned about the potential for any act of academic misconduct to seek advice/counselling from academic or academic support staff. In understanding this, any attempt to enhance performance by dishonest means will result in academic penalties.

¹ Self-plagiarism occurs when a student reuses entire or parts of his/her own work that was previously assessed for academic credit and submits it as part of another work without providing proper acknowledgement of this fact.

A proactive learning and teaching approach:

The University, as a centre for excellence in approaches to learning and teaching, will promote and apply such conventions and initiatives that will reduce the prevalence of academic misconduct and encourage detection and reporting.

This will include –

- Engaging students in discussion and activities to promote understanding of Academic Misconduct.
- Pre-enrolment information and guidance throughout the student life-cycle as set out above.
- Engaging strategies for learning that effectively recognise the “transition” to Higher Education expectations – specifically at the point of induction.
- The design of modules and their delivery
- Developing research skills in students
- Developing expertise amongst staff
- Use of different approaches to assessment design
- Ensuring a “no blind eyes” culture and encouraging action
- Facilitated access to and use of *Turnitin*² as a teaching aid

Detecting Plagiarism:

Students are required, where appropriate, to make a declaration as to the authenticity and originality of any submitted piece of work. This declaration also authorises the University to request and require students to provide an electronic version of any submitted assessment for checking. In concert with the skills and experiences of academic staff the University will utilise electronic tools such as *Turnitin* to detect plagiarism.

At Undergraduate level the University will require that all final year projects and dissertations are submitted to *Turnitin* for analysis. At postgraduate level the University will require that all dissertations (or similar) are submitted to *Turnitin* for analysis. It will be the responsibility of each Academic School to ensure that this requirement is communicated to students in the relevant module guidance and acted upon.

Students may further be required to submit an electronic copy of their work for checking via *Turnitin* where plagiarism is suspected. *Turnitin* will be coordinated within each Academic School by a designated Academic Misconduct Coordinator who will work in liaison with the Conduct & Appeals Unit.

The University will support staff in using *Turnitin* via the Blended Learning Unit who will make training and support available.

Investigation & Penalties:

The University has a defined framework of “Regulations & Procedure for the Investigation of Academic Misconduct” – this is available as a separate document at www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs

² Turnitin is the software currently subscribed to by the University – other, similar software and systems are available and may be utilised in future on the same basis. Further details about Turnitin are available at www.submit.ac.uk

Where a case of cheating, collusion or plagiarism is suspected this procedure should be followed at all times. It is essential that the University, through its academic staff, apply the regulations and procedure fairly and consistently. Advice to academic staff is available from the Conduct & Appeals Unit.

- Copies of this policy, the regulations and procedure and advice to students on how to avoid academic misconduct will be made widely available and easily accessible through the University website.
- The University will provide for an ongoing and highly visible campaign to discourage all aspects of academic misconduct, in liaison with the Students' Union, promoting routes for support & guidance, levels and mechanisms for detection, impact and penalties.

Ongoing Policy & Practice Development:

The University will monitor levels of Academic Misconduct and the impact of developing practice and policies through the relevant Sub-Committees of Academic Board. Which, in collaboration with the Conduct & Appeals Unit, will view reports on the levels of Academic Misconduct and lead on ongoing development of practice and expertise, monitoring developing best practice in the sector and the use of new technologies in an ongoing review of both this policy and associated documents?³

SCHOOL ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT COORDINATOR

As presented in the policy each School is required to nominate an Academic Misconduct Coordinator as:

- A point of contact to receive information/provide feedback on initiatives designed to tackle Academic Misconduct within each School.
- The person within each School having a designated responsibility for the effective use of the *Turnitin* Software. The Coordinator will receive additional training in the use of *Turnitin* and will be maintained as the School User to receive passwords and updates.
- The Coordinator must ensure they have an effective understudy to act in the event of holidays or other prolonged absences.
- The Coordinator will not necessarily be a member of academic staff and this should be determined within each School.

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³ **Associated Documents:**

- Regulations & Procedure for the Investigation of Academic Misconduct.
- Code of Practice for research degree programme students.