

# **Academic conduct procedure**

# Academic Conduct: Our Values

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## **What is good academic conduct?**

At Staffs you will complete assessments so we can check your understanding of what you have learnt, and your work needs to be of a high standard so that any awards that we give out are of the high quality that we expect. If you complete your assessments well, it helps us to make sure that you are ready to enter the workplace or further study. For more reasons on why we assess student's work, please see the [assessment policy and procedures](#).

We will make sure that academic research and assessments are carried out fairly. You are expected to study and complete assessments honestly. This means that;

Your work is your own;  
You have acknowledged every source of information you have used;  
Your research has been done ethically.

If you do this, you will have good academic conduct.

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## **Why is it important?**

We want you to be Proud to be Staffs. Any form of cheating poses a threat to academic standards and the value of our awards. This is important for all of our students.

Good academic conduct is important for you. It is part of your development and without it, you are cheating yourself out of your own learning journey.

In some cases academic conduct can lead to referral to other processes such as the Student Disciplinary Procedure, where appropriate.

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## **How will you help me study with good academic conduct?**

We understand that you may be adjusting to a new way of learning, particularly if you are coming from a different academic culture. We will support you to understand what good academic conduct is from the outset of your course, imbedding it in your learning and development. Study Skills Teams are also here to help if you need refresher support.

We want you to do the best you can. We understand that you may ask someone to proof-read your work and that's ok. But asking others to change your work runs the risk of becoming academic misconduct.

We are not here to catch you out, we want you to understand what is expected of you so that you can learn with good academic conduct and be successful.

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## **What if I am studying with a college or other**

If you are studying a Staffordshire University course at one of our partners, this procedure will apply but will be implemented using local arrangements.

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**educational provider?**

However, if you wish to appeal against a decision on your academic conduct, the appeal will be considered at Staffordshire University and may require your virtual attendance.

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## Poor Academic Conduct: An Explanation

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**What is poor academic conduct?**

Poor academic conduct is called academic misconduct. This is described as:

Any action which could give you, or someone else, an unfair advantage in an assessment, including examinations. It is also any action which could undermine the fairness of assessment and research at the University.

There are different types of academic misconduct. You can find a list [here](#).

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**How is poor academic practice different?**

Poor academic practice is not academic misconduct. Poor academic practice happens when you have used too much of other's work in your assessment, even when you have acknowledged, and we can't tell how much you've learned for yourself. Alternatively, it may be that you haven't understood how to reference your work properly, but there is no evidence that you have tried to gain an unfair advantage in your assessment.

If we feel that your work contains poor academic practice, we will discuss this with you and advise you on how you can improve.

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## Investigations into your Academic Conduct

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**What should I expect and what can you expect of me?**

We understand that going through an academic conduct investigation will be difficult for you. However, we will treat you in a sensitive and non-judgmental way. We handle your case confidentially and the only people who will know about your case will be those involved in providing us with evidence or making a decision. We will share with you all the information we are using to reach a decision and give you every opportunity to tell us your side.

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We know that this is a difficult time for you, but we expect you to be honest and respect those dealing with your situation and we will treat you in the same way.

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**Support and reasonable adjustments**

If you have a disability you can request that a reasonable adjustment is made to prevent you from being disadvantaged. Please let us know as soon as possible if this applies to you.

All meetings undertaken within this procedure can be held digitally

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**What if my Tutor thinks I have committed academic misconduct?**

If your Tutor believes that you have committed academic misconduct, they will gather all evidence and inform your Course Leader. Your Course Leader will inform you. The evidence will normally include the Turnitin Report, if this is relevant, and any sources which you believe you have copied from. If the allegations relate to cheating in an exam, we will include the examination certificate.

If your Course Leader and person identifying the misconduct judge that the instance is likely to be a minor one, as set out in the List of Sanctions, we will deal with your case informally. If it is considered that your case is more serious, we will ask you to attend a formal meeting.

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**Informal Stage**

Your Course Leader and person suspecting the misconduct will invite you to a meeting to discuss the allegation. A letter will be sent to you which will explain what type of academic misconduct is suspected and why. We will share the evidence we have gathered and the [List of Sanctions](#) which could apply.

When you are invited to a meeting, we will give you one week's notice (excluding bank holidays and University closures) and you may bring with you a fellow student or representative of the Students' Union. At the meeting we will put the allegations to you and ask you questions about your work. You will have the opportunity to explain your side and provide us with any evidence you would like us to consider.

If you admit the misconduct, you will be asked to sign the Academic Conduct Report.

If you admit the misconduct or not, after the meeting the Course Leader will make a recommendation of an appropriate sanction to the Head of Department or Director of Institute who will confirm whether the sanction is appropriate. You will be sent a copy of the decision. Please see [Decisions on your Academic Conduct](#) for information on how your Course Leader will make this recommendation.

If, through the investigation or meeting, it is considered that the circumstances may be more serious, your case will be referred to the formal stage.

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**Formal Stage**

If your case is considered to be more serious it will be referred to an Academic Conduct Panel.

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The Panel will include;

- A Head of Department, Director on Institute or Associate Dean who has not been involved in the case (Chair)
- An academic member of staff from another department and with no connection to your case
- A nominee of the Students' Union with no connection to your case

The person who suspects the misconduct will be present to give evidence.

An agenda for the meeting will be sent to you with your invitation to attend. We will also send you the List of Sanctions and the Academic Conduct Report in advance of the meeting, along with all evidence to be considered.

If you do not wish to attend the meeting and admit to the misconduct, you may do so. You can return the signed Academic Misconduct form to us and the Academic Conduct Panel will then apply the most appropriate sanction. We will inform you of the outcome within one week (excluding bank holidays and University closures).

If you do not attend the meeting or provide a valid and timely reason why you are unable to attend, the meeting will proceed in your absence.

We always give you one week's notice (excluding bank holidays and University closures). You may bring a fellow student or Students' Union representative with you and if you want to, you can write a statement and send it to us 48 hours before attending.

Someone will take notes at the meeting and you will be sent a copy of the decision within one week (excluding bank holidays and University closures).

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### **Viva Voce**

If at any point during these proceedings, we have concerns that the work you have submitted is not your own, we may ask you to attend a further meeting with your Module Leader or Project Supervisor to answer more detailed questions. This is called a Viva Voce and this is outside of your normal assessment, this means that it will not contribute towards your mark, but it will help us to decide if your work is your own. A recommendation from the Viva Voce meeting will inform our decision on your academic conduct.

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## **Decisions on your Academic Conduct**

### **How will you decide if academic misconduct has happened?**

We will decide if academic misconduct has or has not occurred.

We will consider all of the evidence to make a decision based on the balance of probability. This means that we will decide whether the allegation of misconduct is more likely to be true than not.

**How will you decide on a sanction?**

Each of the points below may have an impact on the case outcomes and will be used by the panel to assess severity of the case

- a) Whether you have committed academic misconduct before;
- b) How far you are into your academic journey;
- c) How has the academic misconduct in your work impacted on the mark given;
- d) Is the academic misconduct widespread across a range of modules;
- e) Did you admit the offence in the first instance;
- f) Is there is evidence that you committed academic misconduct on purpose;
- g) Do you have personal circumstances which affected your decision making at the time?

Please see a list of [case studies](#) to help you understand how we view offences.

**List of Sanctions**

<b>Instance</b>	<b>Range of sanctions which can be applied</b>
<p><b>Minor</b> instance.</p> <p>Normally a first offence and limited to a single module.</p>	<p>Failure of the assessment. You will be reassessed, should an opportunity exist.</p> <p><b>Or</b></p> <p>Failure of the module concerned with a right to be reassessed should an opportunity exist.</p>
<p><b>Major</b> instance</p> <p>Normally a second offence or an offence which is widespread across multiple modules.</p>	<p>Failure of the module concerned with a right to be reassessed should an opportunity exist.</p> <p><b>Or</b></p> <p>Failure of the level. All of the marks will be wiped clean and you will re-start the level at the next opportunity.</p>
<p><b>Serious</b> instance.</p> <p>Normally a second or third offence or any instance of contract cheating/impersonation.</p>	<p>Failure of the award and/or termination of your studies at the University. Your ability to reapply and enrol again at the university may also be restricted, normally for two whole academic years.</p> <p>The Executive Dean of School will confirm the Panel's decision.</p>

Where Academic Misconduct has been proven and we apply a sanction, the University will be unable to offer you condonement of the module or assessment. For more information on this, please see the "What is module condonement?" section of the Academic Regulations.

In addition to a sanction you will be required to complete an online module about academic conduct and sign a commitment regarding your future study.

# What if I think the decision is wrong?

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## Can I appeal?

If you feel that a decision on your academic conduct is wrong, you can appeal. You will need to put this in writing, to [regulations@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:regulations@staffs.ac.uk) with your evidence, within two weeks (excluding bank holidays and University closures) of the decision.

You may appeal against an academic conduct decision for the following reasons which you must make clear in your appeal:

That the procedure was not followed properly and this has affected the outcome;

That the decision reached was unreasonable due to bias or the harshness of the sanction.

That you have new evidence which you were unable to provide earlier in the process for valid reasons;

The Registry will check that your appeal is:

- On time, within 2 weeks (excluding banks holidays) of the decision.
  - Meets one of the reasons to appeal.
- and
- Is supported by evidence.

If your appeal does not meet all the above, we will not consider it and we will write to you explaining the reason why.

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## The Appeal

If your appeal is eligible, it will be considered by an Academic Conduct Appeal Panel. This will always be held at Staffordshire University and may require virtual attendance if you are a distance learning student or studying with a partner of the University. The Panel is made up of the following;

A Dean or Associate Dean from a different School;  
Two members of the Quality Enhancement Committee or Academic Board with no connection to your case.  
A nominee of the Students' Union with no connection to your case

The Chair of the Panel or person making the original decision will attend to give evidence.

If you do not attend the meeting or provide a valid and timely reason why you are unable to attend, the meeting will proceed in your absence. Please click [here](#) for an agenda.

We always give you time to prepare, this is one week (excluding bank holidays and University closures). You may bring a fellow student or

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Students' Union representative with you and if you want to, you can write a statement and send it to us 48 hours before attending. It's important that we discuss the concerns with you, so you need to tell us as soon as possible if you can't attend the meeting at the date or time that we ask you to. We will do what we can to rearrange the meeting. If you don't tell us, and don't attend we may hold the meeting without you.

Someone will take notes at the meeting and you will be sent a copy of the decision within one week (excluding bank holidays and University closures).

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### **The Appeal Decision**

The Appeal Panel will make one of the following decisions:

- a) To agree with the previous decision
  - b) To start a new investigation because our procedure was not followed.
  - c) To change the decision of the Academic Conduct Panel (but not to increase the penalty) because there is new evidence to consider or the previous decision was unreasonable or biased.
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### **What if I still think the decision is wrong?**

If you disagree with the appeal decision, you have the right to make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within one year of the decision. You can find out more by clicking [here](#).

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## **Other Stuff**

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### **How does academic conduct relate to other procedures?**

If you are registered on a course with professional requirements or Fitness to Practise requirements, and we find that academic misconduct has happened, we may refer your case to the member of the School Management Team with responsibility for Fitness to Practise. They will decide if we need to refer to the [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#)

The academic conduct process overrides the [Exceptional Circumstances Procedure](#). This means that using the Exceptional Circumstances Procedure does not stop us from investigating and penalising any academic misconduct in your work.

If there is evidence that your conduct would also be a breach of discipline, for example if you are found to have intimidated someone, we will also refer your case for consideration under the [Student Conduct Procedure](#).

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## **Types of Academic Misconduct**

We expect you to demonstrate learning by completing your assessments yourself. Any of the below definitions may also include the unauthorised use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) or other mechanisms.

### **Plagiarism**

This is presenting work which is not your own, without acknowledgement of the source, as your own work.

### **Self-Plagiarism**

Submitting the same piece of assessment for two different modules would be self-plagiarism. If you re-use your own work, you must reference it the same way you would reference something you have used from a textbook.

### **Collusion**

This happens if you submit a piece of work done in collaboration with another student as if the work was entirely your own.

### **False Declaration**

This happens if you *either*:

- Make up evidence in support of an Exceptional Circumstances claim; *or*
- Make up evidence in support of an Appeal.

### **Fabrication or Falsification of Data**

This happens if you make up (or manipulate) data or results and record or report on them in a piece of assessment.

### **Bribery or Intimidation**

This happens if you pay; offer some other inducement; or through intimidation attempt to gain an unfair advantage in an assessment. This offence may also be referred to the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

## **Contract Cheating**

This happens if you arrange for an assessment to be completed by a third party and pass the assessment off as your own. This might involve buying either the whole or part of an assessment, for example from an auction site or essay mill.

## **Examination Misconduct**

An examination includes class-tests, written, oral and practical examinations.

The following is a list of academic misconduct relating to examinations, it is not an exhaustive list.

### Unauthorised Materials

- Getting, or seeing, a copy of an examination question paper before the date and time of its authorised release (this covers both 'seen' and 'unseen' papers)
- Having an unauthorised dictionary in an examination

### Technology in an Examination

- The possession of technological or electronic devices such as mobile phones, smart watches and hidden earpieces/micro earbuds/mini cameras
- The use of unauthorised material stored in the memory of a pre-programmable calculator, organiser, watch, or mobile phone
- Having a calculator other than a dedicated calculator with a calculation function only

### Copying

- Copying from, or trying to copy from, another candidate
- Having or using concealed notes

### Communicating

Communicating with, or attempting to communicate with, any person other than an invigilator during an examination

### Impersonation

- Getting, or trying to get, someone else to take your examination for you
- Getting, or trying to get, someone to take an examination for another student
- Taking, or attempting to take, an examination for another student

In such cases, both the student and the impersonator have committed academic misconduct. We may report this type of academic misconduct to the Police: impersonation is a type of fraud.