



The Union Advice Service

Guide to Academic Misconduct

The University have a duty to respond to concerns about student **Academic misconduct**.

- a. **Plagiarism**, which is defined as the knowing or reckless presentation of another person's work or ideas as one's own, and includes the use of published or unpublished work without acknowledging the source;
 - b. **Cheating**, which is defined as acting dishonestly or unfairly in order to gain an academic advantage. This includes the falsification of information and cheating in examinations;
 - c. **Collusion**, which is defined as aiding or attempting to aid another member of the University in gaining an unfair academic advantage by:
 1. *The unauthorised and/or unacknowledged collaboration of persons in a piece of assessed work, and/or;*
 2. *Allowing a piece of assessed work to be copied by another person or persons.*
 - d. **Obtaining or purchasing work** from another person or organisation and submitting it as one's own;
 - e. **Research misconduct**, as defined in the Research Integrity Code of Practice (concerns about research misconduct should first be reported to the Secretary to Council, who may refer a matter for consideration under this Regulation);
 - f. **Breaches of any University rules**, regulations, policies or procedures relating to academic activity or assessment, such as the Examinations Policy.
- ✓ **A concern** about your academic misconduct must first be reported to the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) of your allocated College.
- ✓ **An Investigating officer** will be allocated to your case and the Investigating Officer will write to you to notify you of the investigation.
- The Investigating Officer may request to meet with you on one or more occasions during the course of investigation. **They will give you at least 5 working days' notice of any such meetings.**

- The Investigating Officer may invite you to provide a written response to the concerns and to present any supporting information. You will normally be given **IO working days to respond**.
- ✓ **Referral** Once the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) has received the Officer's report a decision may be made to hold a hearing or you may receive an outcome via letter.

The University will normally respond to concerns relating to the academic misconduct of a student in accordance with the [Academic Misconduct Procedure](#).

This guide should be read in conjunction with [Senate Regulation 6 – Student Conduct \(Academic and Non-Academic\)](#).

More detailed information can be found below.

- **What is academic misconduct?**

From the moment you register with the University, you agree to abide by Brunel rules and regulations. Academic integrity is vital to any Higher Education Institution and Brunel University is no different.

As you can see from the list on page 1, academic misconduct involves a varied range of possibilities and it may be that you are considered to be in breach of more than one regulation.

This guide is about conduct which breaches **academic rules**. If you are facing a disciplinary following an offence that is not academic in nature then please refer to the **ADVICE SERVICE guide on non academic misconduct** and the Universities information on [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).

- **What is Plagiarism, Collusion and Cheating?**

The most common academic disciplinary offences considered under the academic disciplinary procedure are **Plagiarism, Collusion and Cheating**:

- ✓ **Plagiarism** can occur quite easily but can incur a penalty that is likely to impact your Grade Point Average (GPA).
 - Most assignments will involve some form of referencing and if you get it wrong, you could be seen to be trying to gain an unfair advantage by using work/sources that are not your ideas because you failed to acknowledge them.
 - Simply failing to proofread your work before submission or failing to understand how to properly reference can mean you may be investigated for academic misconduct.

- It is also possible to plagiarise your own work if you use text that you have used in a prior assignment and not acknowledged in referencing in the current assessment.
 - Where group work contains plagiarised work, all group members will be in question.
- ✓ **Collusion** in assessments is not allowed with the exception of some group work projects.
- Discussing ideas is good practice but your work must always be your own independent work.
 - Seeking support from a friend is allowable but asking a friend to do your work is collusion.
 - Collusion does not necessarily mean your own work; it could be you helping a friend; this is still in breach of the rules.
- ✓ **Cheating** generally involves examinations but can be in relation to any academic work, research, any assessment.
- Taking a book into an examination that is not allowed will be considered as cheating.
 - Taking revision notes into an examination will normally be regarded as cheating.
 - Written notes on your hand, even if not associated to that exam may be considered as cheating
 - The University consider any attempted action, even if unsuccessful and this will result in a penalty, if proven.
- ✓ **Contract Cheating** it goes without saying that buying an essay online is not acceptable and is considered as contract cheating.

[The Academic Skills Service](#) can help you further to improve your writing practice.

The Academic Misconduct Process

- **Reporting of concerns**

A concern may arise when your work is being marked, when you are being monitored in an examination therefore it is likely to take several weeks before you receive a letter of concern.

- A marker, module lead or invigilator may raise a concern and forward it to the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs).
- The Deputy Dean will decide whether the concern falls within the scope of the Academic [Misconduct Policy \(and SR6\)](#).
- - a) Where the concern **does fall within the scope of this procedure**, they will appoint an independent Investigating Officer to investigate the concern.

- b) Where the concern does not fall within the scope of this procedure, they may either dismiss the concern, or refer it for consideration under any other relevant University regulation or procedure.

- **Investigation**

The Investigating Officer will first write you to notify you of the investigation. This will usually be via email and:

- ✓ Inform you of the concern that has been raised, the purpose of the investigation and will provide a copy of the academic misconduct procedure and Senate Regulation 6.
- ✓ Inform you that if you do not engage with the investigation, including attending any meetings when requested, the investigation may continue in your absence.
- ✓ May include the gathering of written, oral and other information from relevant sources.

- **My letter mentions Temporary Suspension and/or Exclusion:**

The University have the right to temporarily suspend you from all or part of your studies.

- This may include suspension from placement or any other University activity, including examinations, receiving information about results or progression, and re-enrolment.
- You are temporarily excluded as a student from using all or particular University services or facilities and/or entering the University campus.
- This may also include temporarily withdrawing or amending your Brunel computer account access privileges.

If you breach the terms of your suspension and/or exclusion this will be considered a further potential breach of the Universities rules of Discipline. Therefore a further Disciplinary Procedure might be instigated against you.

It is vital that you do not come onto campus without permission from the Secretary to the Misconduct and Professional Suitability Board, Ms Liz Racz (O1895 265472 / conduct@brunel.ac.uk)

Agreement shall normally be given for the purposes of seeking the advice or support from the ADVICE SERVICE.

- **Can I appeal the decision to Temporary Suspend and/or Exclude me?**

You do have the opportunity to appeal the decision, but it must fall within the below basis:

- a) That there has been a procedural irregularity.
- b) That there was bias on the part of the decision-maker.

- c) That the decision is unreasonable and/or disproportionate.
- d) That there is new material evidence which the student can demonstrate was for good reason not previously available.

If you DO decide to appeal, then you must let the Secretary to the Misconduct Panel know **within 10 working days** of the decision to temporarily suspend and/or exclude you.

The Academic Registrar will consider your appeal and will:

- Reject your appeal - Maintain the terms of the temporary suspension and/or exclusion.
- Partially accepted your appeal - Vary the terms of the temporary suspension and/or exclusion.
- Uphold your appeal - End the temporary suspension and/or exclusion.
- **Meeting the Investigating Officer**

The Investigating Officer may request to meet with you on one or more occasions during the course of the investigation and will:

- ✓ Inform you of the purpose of any meetings **in advance**.
- ✓ Give you at least **5 working days' notice** of any such meetings.
- ✓ Inform you of your entitlement to be accompanied to and/or represented at any such meetings in accordance with Paragraph 12 of this procedure.
- ✓ Normally take notes of any meetings and a copy will be made available to you.

- **What do I say when I meet the Investigating Officer?**

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the concerns that have been raised and to help the Investigating Officer ascertain what has occurred.

We would always advise you to be honest in your response and explain what happened in your own words. It is vital you thoroughly look through any evidence that is presented against you in order to understand why the concern has been raised.

- **Written Response**

The Investigating Officer may invite you to provide a written response to the concerns and to present any supporting information or evidence.

- ✓ You will normally **get 5 working days** from the date of the letter/email to submit your response.

- **What do I write in my Response?**

As with the meeting, you just need to be honest and respond in your own words. It would be useful if you could include:

- Whether you admit or deny the allegations?
 - If you admit to them then, was it intentional/or not?
 - If after seeing the evidence, you can understand why the concern has been raised?
 - If there may have been any circumstances that impacted on the work involved or may have impacted your academic ability.
 - Evidence to support any issues you may have encountered.
 - Consider if you have any preparatory materials and draft work that may assist you in evidencing the work is yours if applicable.
 - Whether you understand how to reference.
 - Whether you proofread the work before submission.
- **Investigation conclusion**

The Investigating Officer will provide a report and copies of information to the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs). The report should be copied to you also. They can decide to:

- ✓ Dismiss the concern and take no further action.
- ✓ Determine that the concern relates to **poor academic practice**, in which case the concern will be dismissed. Your work will be marked on its merits for the sections of work that are yours and this could mean the work does not pass.
- ✓ Refer the concern back to the Investigating Officer for further investigation.
- ✓ **Refer the concern to the Clerk to the MPS board for further action.**
- ✓ Refer the concern for consideration under another University regulation or procedure.

The Clerk to the MPS board will take one of the following actions:

If it is considered to be less serious, where the matter may be considered a first offence (no previous history of academic misconduct).

- ✓ Refer the concern for consideration by the Vice-Chancellor's Representative (VCR).
- ✓ You will be informed of the outcome by letter which will be emailed to you.

It is considered to be more serious, where the matter may be considered a second offence (previous history of academic misconduct).

- ✓ Refer the concern for consideration at an Academic Misconduct Panel hearing. A hearing will convene.
- ✓ Refer a case back to the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) for further investigation.

- **Academic Misconduct Hearing**

You will be written to confirming the date and time of the Hearing and will normally **at least 10 working days prior to the date** of the Academic Misconduct Panel Hearing and you will be informed of the following:

- The name of the Panel members.
- A copy of the academic misconduct procedure and Senate Regulation 6.
- A statement setting out the University's case against you.
- A copy of the evidence and documentation in support of the allegation that will be submitted to the Panel.
- The name of the person acting as the University Representative.

You will be asked:

- Whether you will be bringing an ADVICE SERVICE Advisor, Brunel friend or Brunel Academic (for example personal tutor) to the hearing.
- Whether you will be calling any witnesses to appear at the hearing.
- To make a written response to the University's case and the allegation of academic misconduct. This is likely to be the second opportunity you have been given to respond – you may want to use your previously submitted response.
- You will need to submit your statement **no later than five working days before the scheduled date of the hearing.**
- You will be sent a copy of all documentation and evidence **no later than five working days before the scheduled date of the hearing.**
- **The order of proceedings** will be stuck to stringently please find an overview of **the order of proceedings here.**

You will normally receive an outcome within 5 working days of the hearing.

Outcomes

The Misconduct Panel can decide that you have no case to answer but The Misconduct Panel may find that you do have a case to answer and apply a penalty.

What penalties can be applied?

Penalties are described in Appendix A of the [Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)

In general, a UG or PG student facing a first offence will receive a zero:

“A mark of zero/grade F is assigned to the piece of work and to the associated assessment block; reassessment will be permitted (or further attempt in the case of an offence during reassessment), for a maximum grade of D- in the assessment block.”

- ✓ The decision about whether or not you may re-sit the work is made by your College. Therefore, you should approach them to find out whether they allow re-sits and, if so, when these are likely to take place.
- ✓ If you are allowed a re-sit you must obtain the minimum number of credits as specified in the Senate Regulations) in order to be eligible for the award for which you are registered.
- ✓ The mark of zero for the module in which you were found guilty of an academic offence will be taken into account in the calculation of your final marks which determine the Class of your Degree.

As every student's situation is different, you should seek further advice from your College in order to determine what the likely effect of being found guilty on the award for which you are registered.

A second offence carries a heavier penalty and it is likely that you will be expelled.

- **Can I appeal the Misconduct Panel's decision?**

The Appeal process is described in paragraphs 69-84 of the [Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)

You can appeal the panel's decision within **10 working days** of the receipt of the result from the hearing. It is highly recommended that you seek advice on this from the ADVICE SERVICE.

The appeal needs to confirm on what basis you are appealing on. These are the following permitted grounds for an appeal:

- a. there has been procedural irregularity, i.e. that some rules or procedures were not applied correctly;*
- b. there was prejudice or bias on part of the decision- maker or decision-making body;*
- c. the decision is unreasonable and/or the sanction or outcome disproportionate*
- d. there is new evidence important to the case which the student can demonstrate was for good reason not previously available.*

We can help you decide whether appealing is a realistic option and whether you have a case for an appeal.

- **Should I disclose difficulties I had with the work and in my personal life?**

If you do have particular extenuating circumstances that may have had an effect on you at the time of writing the piece of work or attending an exam, it may be helpful to get a supporting letter from an objective third party.

- ✓ This could be a doctor or counsellor if they were aware of your personal circumstances at the time.
- ✓ Where possible you should discuss the letter with your counsellor or doctor to make sure that they are aware you agree to your personal data being released. These details should include (where possible) confirmation of diagnosis, confirmation of time affected by the situation and an indication of the severity of your condition and the likely impact.
- ✓ It is recommended that you show a draft copy to the ADVICE SERVICE before submission (you should not however let this cause you to miss the IO working days deadline). You should also read our guide on [Extenuating Circumstances](#).

There are many examples of circumstances which could have impacted on your academic work, so if you are in any doubt whether you should include this in your response to the allegations, **please speak to an ADVICE SERVICE adviser.**

- **What is poor academic practice?**

Poor academic practice refers to unintentional and inadequate academic practice rather than plagiarism; if it is decided that your work resembles that of poor academic practice rather than plagiarism, your work should be marked or graded in the normal way (on its academic merits).

If you are a final year student, Poor Academic Practice may be treated as an unacceptable response to allegations of plagiarism. You have after all managed to successfully progress to level 3, after 2 years of studying and it will be expected that you know how to reference correctly.

- **What is URKUND?**

Brunel University uses URKUND is a fully-automatic machine learning text-recognition system made for detecting, preventing and handling plagiarism, no matter which language you are writing in.

URKUND compare your work with the other sources and produces an originality report. This report highlights where matches have been found in the text and indicates the sources of the match. Reports are colour coded to indicate the percentage of text matched.

If you receive a URKUND report as part of the evidence for plagiarism allegations, you should immediately arrange to meet your personal tutor or speak to us if you are unsure what it shows/means.

What advice and help can I expect to receive from the Advice Service?

- Help you to understand the process.
- Talk through with you what has gone wrong and how to convey this to your College and the Misconduct and Professional Suitability Board.
- Check draft letters and oral statements before you submit them.
- Talk through realistic outcomes and what you could expect.
- Support you at the Disciplinary Panel and through the process.
- Help you decide whether appealing is a realistic option.

If you would like advice on the Academic Misconduct process then please complete our online enquiry form on Brunelstudents.com and a member of the **ADVISE SERVICE Team will get in touch!**

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