

September 2024



LEICESTER
STUDENTS'
UNION



ACADEMIC ADVICE

**Responding to an
allegation of Academic
Misconduct**

**Plagiarism, Collusion or
Cheating**

What is Academic Misconduct?

Academic Misconduct refers to *'any behaviour by a student that may give them or another student an unfair academic advantage.'* Examples of such misconduct are detailed below (but not exhaustive) but the University will investigate any conduct that it considers meets the overall definition of academic misconduct:

Examples of academic misconduct listed in [Senate Regulation 11 \(Part B\)](#) include (but aren't limited to):

Plagiarism:

submitting written work that contains material authored by another person(s) or generated by a platform (i.e. artificial intelligence), whether published or unpublished, without appropriate acknowledgement.

This includes online and print sources, prose, code, graphs, and University owned teaching and learning materials. As well as verbatim reproduction of material, unacknowledged paraphrase and 'patchworking' (the use and rearrangement of several sources without appropriate references) is also plagiarism.

Failure to acknowledge sources, even if caused by unintentional error, may be defined as academic misconduct and considered under these regulations.

Self-Plagiarism (Recycling), Including: -

Submitting for assessment work that a student has previously submitted for assessment, whether in whole or in part, unless this is expressly permitted. This regulation applies to work submitted as part of the same programme or a different programme, in a different year, or at another institution.

Collusion, Including: -

- Cooperation between students to jointly produce work where there is a requirement that it be produced independently. This includes sharing ideas in person and/or online.
- A student allowing another individual(s) to copy their work.
- A student sharing their work (in whole or in part) with a third party – for example, by uploading their work to a website – which may allow another individual(s) to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Cheating in relation to supervised examinations, including copying from the examination script of another candidate, obtaining improper assistance from another person, taking unauthorised material or a device into an examination, allowing another person to impersonate them in an examination or impersonating another student.

Contract Cheating

- Paying another person(s) (including third party) to undertake work or buying work (in part or in whole) from an 'essay mill' or other source, or in any way using answers advertised or provided by a third party.
- Entering into the preliminary stages of an arrangement with the above-mentioned, even if the student does not complete the transaction.

Falsification, including:

- Falsifying results, data, or references, or falsely claiming to have carried out experiments, interviews, or other forms of research.
- Failing to obtain ethical approval when required to do so or failing to comply with conditions of such approval.
- Submitting a false claim for mitigating circumstances, such as where the evidence has been fabricated.

What happens if academic misconduct is suspected in my work?

If an internal examiner (normally the person marking the work) suspects misconduct they will then compile the evidence. This may involve a review of other assessed work submitted by the student also.

- **Minor Academic Misconduct** – This does not merit referring to the Academic Conduct Officer or a sanction. However, the mark for the assignment may be reduced.
- **Moderate Academic Misconduct** – this will be referred to the Academic Conduct Officer for further consideration.
- **Major Academic Misconduct** – this will be referred to the Academic Conduct Officer for further consideration.

Plagiarism and Collusion are classed as **Moderate or Major Academic Misconduct**

Examples of Minor Misconduct may involve (but isn't limited to)

- a limited amount of material or copied text which is referenced in the bibliography but is not properly cited.
- a limited amount of material or copied text that has been subjected to minor linguistic changes with or without citation.
- a limited amount of material or copied text that is cited but not in quotation marks.
- limited collaboration between students as evidenced by structure, source or copied text; this includes cases where the written work is original throughout.
- limited collaboration between students as evidenced by structure, source or copied text (including where the written work is original throughout).

If minor academic misconduct is found, specific feedback will be provided to you about the issues in your academic practice. Errors at this level do not merit referral to the Academic Conduct Officer or a sanction for academic misconduct. However, the mark for the assignment may be reduced to an extent comparable to other minor errors the student should address and improve in the future

Moderate or Major Allegation

If the Academic Conduct Officer decides that there's reason to investigate or requires further consideration, you'll be informed in writing and will be presented with the evidence.

You may be asked to submit a written response to the allegation, with evidence, that you think the Academic Conduct Officer was not aware of, before they make their decision and you may be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the situation.

A deadline will be set for your response, which will be **no less than five working days** from the date of notification of this request by the Academic Conduct Officer. If you don't respond to the allegation on time, the Academic Conduct Officer will decide without offering you any further opportunity to present your case.

If you are called to a meeting you will be given **no less than 5 working days** from the date of the notification of this request by the Academic Conduct Officer.

What if there are mitigating factors?

Mitigating factors **will not excuse** academic misconduct **nor result in the dismissal of a case** of academic misconduct.

If you are experiencing serious or significant events beyond your control that have affected your health, or personal life **you should apply for mitigation** through MyStudent Record and also register with Accessibility, to ensure any reasonable adjustments are put in place. If you are unsure about this, please contact your Department or the Advice Service for further information.

How do I respond to an academic misconduct allegation?

If you are asked to make a written submission to the allegation of academic misconduct, you need to produce a response that explains what has happened from your perspective, detailing the steps you took to prepare the work, and how any issues may have come about. **Be honest in your account**, and it was not intentional, make this clear. Evidence of the circumstances should also be included (such as screenshots of draft work, notes etc).

We also recommend that you explain how you would avoid a similar issue from happening again, giving details of any support you are receiving/would seek in the future.

What happens next?

Once your response has been submitted and, if necessary, a meeting has taken place, the Academic Conduct Officer will review the evidence, your response, and make a decision based on their findings.

There are four possible outcomes of an investigation:

1. That there is no case and it is dismissed.
2. That academic misconduct cannot be proven, but there is evidence of Minor Misconduct. In this situation, you will be advised to seek academic support, and will have to complete an online plagiarism tutorial.
3. That there is evidence of **Moderate Academic Misconduct** and a departmental sanction will be given.

4. That there is evidence of **Major Academic Misconduct**, or that the case is too complex to resolve without a full hearing. It will then be referred to a Student Discipline Panel for consideration.

You'll receive notification of the outcome from the Academic Conduct Officer, with reasons for the decision, **normally within 10 working days** of your response deadline.

Discipline Panel Meetings

If, there is evidence of major misconduct the matter may go for consideration by a Student Discipline Panel

Each Panel will consist of three members, one of whom will act as Chair, all of whom are impartial and will have undertaken appropriate training. A Students' Union Sabbatical Officer may be a member of the Panel depending on the nature of the case under consideration.

Students will be notified of their required attendance at a Student Discipline Panel in writing **at least five working days** before the scheduled date.

You can take a friend or companion with you as moral support (they cannot speak on your behalf **nor** must they be a qualified member of the legal profession).

You will be given the opportunity to nominate witnesses. It is the decision of the Chair as to whether nominated witnesses should be invited to attend.

A decision will then be made according to the evidence presented, and you'll be informed of the decision and the reasons for this decision, in writing, **usually within five working days** of the Panel hearing.

Please note that guidance on academic integrity (misconduct) is provided by Schools to all students and **ignorance of the rules of academic writing and integrity will therefore not provide a defence** to an allegation of academic misconduct.

What are the sanctions for academic misconduct?

The following factors and any others considered relevant may be factored into determination of the sanction:

- Scale and extent of the academic misconduct;
- Previous offences;
- Relevant mitigating factors. The Panel should be satisfied that these are **exceptional**, that there is good reason why they were not brought to the University's attention at an earlier point and, if appropriate, are supported by evidence.

Possible Sanctions - the Panel may impose any sanction listed in [Senate Regulation 11.127](#) instead of or in addition to:-

- Reprimand
- Formal Written Warning
- Written apology to those affected by the misconduct
- Requirement to attend or complete training/personal development/educational resources
- Requirement to pay for damages
- A fine (£50-£1000)
- Suspension of specific academic/or non-academic privileges
- Enforcement of No-Contact Order(s) with other named student(s)
- Exclusion from Degree Congregation
- Exclusion from specific building/use of facilities for a fixed period
- Suspension from the University for a fixed period
- Permanent exclusion from the University
- Prohibited to re-apply to the University
- Revocation of University Award

How do I challenge a Sanction?

You **CANNOT appeal against the finding of a Minor Misconduct** as this does not constitute a sanction for academic misconduct.

If you want to appeal sanction you can do so by submitting a [Student Discipline Appeal Form](#). This must be **submitted within 10 working days of notification** of the decision and submitted to the Academic Registrar or nominee.

Appeals may be submitted on one or more of the following grounds:

- That there was a procedural irregularity in the consideration of the case by the Academic Conduct Officer, or Student Discipline Panel;
- That evidence available to the Academic Conduct Officer, or Student Discipline Panel was not fully considered;
- That there was prejudice or bias in the conduct of the Academic Conduct Officer, or Student Discipline Panel;
- That the decision was unreasonable;
- That the sanction imposed was excessive;
- That there is new material evidence that for good reason was not available for consideration by the Academic Conduct Officer, or Student Discipline Panel.

On the form you must complete your personal details, select your grounds for appeal, and explain your case. You will need to demonstrate your reasons for appealing on these grounds in as much detail as possible, and provide evidence of such. You should also state whether you're appealing the finding, the sanction, or both. If providing new evidence, you will also need to explain why you weren't able to provide such evidence previously.

Once you've completed the form you will need to submit it, to be received **by the deadline**, to the Secretary to the Senate Student Discipline Committee, along with your evidence. Their email address is studentconduct@le.ac.uk

If you're unable to meet the deadline, you will need to state why on your appeal form. The Secretary will then review your appeal to establish whether there is a good reason for it being submitted late. However, if your appeal is submitted late, there is **no guarantee** that it will be considered.

What happens next?

The appeal will be referred to the Chair of the Senate Student Discipline Committee, who will assign a 'designated officer' from the Committee to review your case. This member will have had no prior involvement with your case.

The designated officer will then review your appeal, and any documentation relevant and make a decision. The appeal **may** be put forward for further consideration to an Appeals Panel.

If it is found that **you have no ground to appeal** you will be issued with a Completion of Proceedings letter and notified of your right to submit a complaint to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#), if your case is eligible, **within 12 months of the notification**.

Student Discipline Appeal Panel

The appeal panel will consist of three impartial members, the designated officer who referred to the Appeal Panel will usually act as Chair.

You will be notified at least **5 working days** before the date of the panel is due to meet. You will be sent the same documentation relating to the case. You will be invited to attend and if you cannot the Chair will determine whether, based on the evidence available, that the Panel can proceed and reach a decision in your absence.

You can take a friend or companion with you as moral support (they cannot speak on your behalf **nor** must they be a qualified member of the legal profession).

The Panel will decide if the appeal is upheld or dismissed in whole or in part and any outcome imposed. You will be notified **within 5 working days** of the date of the Panel hearing.

Student Discipline Appeal Panel Outcome

The Student Discipline Appeal Panel may determine one of the following outcomes: -

- confirm the outcome of the original decision of the Student Discipline Panel;
- revise the sanction imposed to a lower sanction;

- conclude that the original outcome was unsafe and should be overturned and any sanction removed.

A completion of Proceedings Letter will be issued. You'll be notified of your right to submit a complaint to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#), if your case is eligible, within 12 months of the notification.

What can the Advice Service do for me?

Here in the [Advice Service](#), we provide confidential academic and housing advice. We also offer guidance and signposting to Employment Rights, Legal and Wellbeing Services and anything else that enriches your University experience.

We are an independent organisation and separate from the University. Therefore, we have no involvement in the decision-making processes of the University and we do not have access to any of the data on academic and/or personal records. This means we can only advise or signpost based on what you tell us.

We can advise you on applying for Mitigating Circumstances requests and timescales so please contact us for more information or the How To Guide.

One of our advisers can discuss the situation with you, and explain anything you're unsure of. We can also help you establish what you need to include in your response to the allegation, and check through your account before you submit it.

If you decide to attend a meeting to discuss the allegation with the Academic Conduct Officer, one of our advisers can attend the meeting with you as moral support (companion) but we CANNOT represent you. We can also meet with you beforehand, to help you prepare for the meeting, and discuss the meeting afterwards to decide on next steps support (**please be aware that availability will depend on staff capacity and notice given**).

For an Appeal, we can advise you on how best to put your case across via your appeal form, and we can check through it for you before you submit it, and provide you with some feedback on how to improve it. (please be aware that availability will depend on staff capacity and notice given).

If you wish to submit a complaint to the OIA, we can also advise you on this process.

Please get in touch with us via our [contact form](#), and we will then get back to you to provide further advice, or depending on the identified need, an appointment. Please note that the Advice Service is a small team so to ensure a timely response or availability, contact the Advice Service as soon as possible.

Reception opening hours are 10-3pm, Monday to Friday (during term time).

Who else can I talk to about allegations of academic misconduct?

The following people and services may be able to provide more information and support with plagiarism allegations:

- **Academic Conduct Officer** – If you have any questions about your allegation, the Academic Conduct Officer should be able to discuss these with you.
- **Personal Tutor/Module Convenor** – Your Personal Tutor or Module Convenor may be able to give you some guidance about what is expected from the department with regards to referencing etc.
- **Student Conduct and Complaints Team** – If you have any queries about a Panel Hearing, or about your Student Discipline Appeal, the Student Conduct and Complaints Team (in particular the Secretary to the Senate Student Discipline Committee) may be able to assist. Contact them at student studentconduct@le.ac.uk or call 0116 252 2605.
- **[Centre for Academic Achievement](#)** - The Centre for Academic Achievement provides one-to-one help, advice and online resources for University of Leicester undergraduate and masters students. Email studyhelp@le.ac.uk or visit their website to book an appointment.
- **[AccessAbility Centre](#)** - The AccessAbility Centre offers support and practical help for students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties; physical, mental health or mobility difficulties; and deafness or visual impairment. To find out if they can offer you support, contact them on accessible@le.ac.uk or call +44 (0)116 252 5002.

Useful Links

- [Mitigating circumstances Information and Policy](#)
- [Senate Regulation 11 - Academic Misconduct](#): Regulations governing student conduct and discipline
- [Universities information about Student Discipline Appeals](#)
- (The Discipline Appeal form can be found at this page)
- [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#) webpage

Your course handbook may include useful information about referencing.

leicesterunion.com/advice

Advice Service

advice.le.ac.uk

0116 223 1132



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