

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS
**ACADEMIC GOOD PRACTICE AND HOW
TO DEAL WITH ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT
ALLEGATIONS**
GUIDANCE FOR STAFF

1. How should I use these FAQs?

These FAQs are merely advice concerning the [Policy on Good Academic Practice](#), which has been approved by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee.

All staff are expected to be aware of this policy and to abide by it at all times.

The Policy on Good Academic Practice must be taken as the definitive source of information.

2. Why do I need to read these FAQs?

As a member of the academic staff you should be aware that the University of St Andrews takes academic misconduct very seriously and that there are strict processes to follow in the case of suspected academic misconduct.

3. What is good academic practice and why is it important?

Good academic practice is the responsible use of data, sources, evidence and other information, however derived, in academic work. It therefore includes proper citation and referencing in written work, responsible use of experimental data, acknowledgement of sources, etc. Good academic practice is important in the wider academic community. Students have a duty to others to acknowledge their input to works that they produce, and should not be seeking to claim credit for the ideas or analysis of others. Therefore at this level of education the University expects students to take ideas and information from various sources and work them up along with their own ideas and interpretations into an original piece of writing, documenting the sources they have used and distinguishing their own ideas from those of other people.

4. Why is addressing academic misconduct important?

We have a duty as members of staff in the University of St Andrews to educate our students in the values of the academy, which include adherence to good academic practice. If we fail to address potential cases of academic misconduct we are failing our students.

Academic integrity is fundamental to the values promoted by the University.

It is important that all students be judged on their ability, and that no student be allowed to gain an advantage unfairly over others to affect the security and integrity of the assessment process, or to diminish the reliability and quality of a St Andrews degree. All matriculated students of the University sign up to the *Sponsio Academica* and Honour Code, undertaking to read and abide by this policy.

5. How do my students learn about good academic practice?

All students matriculated in the University of St Andrews must complete the on-line training in good academic practice and any School specific training or materials available. Advisers of Studies should be familiar with any School specific requirements and be able to refer students to the School Academic Misconduct Officer for more detailed advice.

6. Who in my School will know more about academic misconduct?

All Schools have a nominated Academic Misconduct Officer who is responsible for dealing with allegations of Academic Misconduct in the School. In such cases if the AMO is unavailable then the Director of Teaching will also be familiar with the policy and its implementation.

7. What is academic misconduct?

There are some activities of students in higher education that most people would find easy to identify as "cheating".

Some major areas of academic misconduct are: plagiarism; false citation; aiding and abetting; falsification of data; multiple submissions; cheating in exams and contract cheating.

8. Is it not reasonable to expect students to know about academic misconduct from previous education?

Students come to St Andrews with a wide variety of earlier educational experience. Practices that were deemed acceptable at lower levels of education or in a different cultural context may not be acceptable in the University of St Andrews. We cannot therefore assume a full understanding of the nature of academic misconduct on the part of students entering the University at either postgraduate or undergraduate level. For this reason there is compulsory on-line training for all matriculating students.

9. What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the submission of someone else's work as though it were one's own. Plagiarism may occur unintentionally through poor work practices, as students may for example submit work that contains the words or ideas of others without realising that they need proper acknowledgement. Close paraphrase of a source might also count as plagiarism if there is no proper acknowledgement. A piece of work that contains plagiarised material may be subject to a penalty even if there were no intention to plagiarise. It is consequently very important for students to understand how to avoid producing work that contains plagiarised material.

10. What is false citation?

Sources should be cited accurately, fully and in accordance with disciplinary conventions. False citation is the use of incorrect citation or acknowledgment of a source. This may include citing correct information from the wrong source or incorrectly citing information from a valid source. It may also include the citation of sources that were not used to prepare the academic work in a bibliography or other list of references.

11. What is aiding and abetting?

A student who allows someone to copy their work also commits an offence under this University's policy, so both the copier and the original author may face proceedings. This misconduct could take the form of copying results of a laboratory experiment, part of an essay, or part of a computer program, for example.

In many instances students are encouraged to discuss their work with other students, and such discussions may lead to modification in their own work, to their legitimate benefit. There may also be occasions where students are asked to work in a group and to submit the results of collaborative work. However, allowing someone to copy work for submission and submit it as though it were their own is likely to give rise to an offence by both parties.

It is very important for staff to indicate clearly to students what level of collaboration is acceptable particularly in a group work context.

12. What is falsification of data?

Falsification of data is the inclusion of falsified, invented, or fictitious data or information in a submission, or the deliberate concealment or distortion of the true nature, origin, or function of such data or information. In any academic study the integrity of the researcher is vital. Any data used in a lab report, population study, or economic report should be real and representative. It is entirely unacceptable to fabricate or alter data to fill in a gap in a graph, or to invent results of an experiment and then report them as genuine measurements.

It is also unacceptable to conceal data in order to improve the outcome of research.

13. What is multiple submission?

Work prepared for assessment should be submitted once and once only. Submitting the same material for more than one assessment task is academic misconduct. This applies to substantial portions of previously submitted work as well as to whole assignments.

On occasion assignments within a module may intentionally build on each other, such as submitting an outline before submitting a report. Staff constructing such an assessment should indicate clearly to students what is acceptable.

Given rules about multiple submission, schools have a duty to construct

patterns of assessment that do not invite students to engage in this practice.

14. What is contract cheating?

The submission of material supplied by third parties, such as essay purchasing web sites or another student, is academic misconduct, as is attempting to acquire such material.

15. What is cheating in exams?

Any attempt to gain improper advantage in the course of a University examination is academic misconduct.

An extensive list of materials permitted in examinations is maintained by the Examinations Office and may be viewed on the web:

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/academic/examinations/rules/>

If in any doubt, please speak to the Chief Invigilator of the examination venue.

16. What is cheating in class tests?

Staff should be aware that there is also information about the conduct of Class Tests:

<http://www.standrews.ac.uk/media/registry/examsandtimetabling/Procedures for Class Tests.pdf>

17. How might staff detect plagiarism, multiple submission and contract cheating?

When marking submitted work staff should be alert to the possibility of academic misconduct. The University makes plagiarism detection software available to Schools. Staff should be aware of and follow the policy of their School for using this.

Using plagiarism detection software students may be asked to submit their work directly or via MMS, and staff may submit student work directly for checking. MMS can be set up so that all submitted work is automatically processed using plagiarism detection software. Plagiarism detection software normally keeps a record of submitted work for checking against future submissions (this record keeping can be disabled).

18. What should I do if I suspect academic misconduct?

The University has a detailed policy for ensuring fair adjudication of all cases of suspected academic misconduct. A staff member who suspects academic misconduct should draw his or her suspicion to the attention of the School Academic Misconduct Officer (AMO) who will be responsible for any further action. The staff member should not in any circumstances raise the allegation directly with the student.

19. What should I do in the case of poor academic practice, which might not amount to academic misconduct?

Distinguishing poor academic practice from academic misconduct can be difficult; if you are in doubt consult your AMO.

However, staff will regularly encounter poor academic practice which is clearly not serious enough to be defined as academic misconduct as, for example, use of a non-standard referencing system or representing accurate data with a poor choice of graph. In such instances staff should draw the issue to the attention of the student either in written feedback or through oral feedback sessions, and explain clearly what good academic practice would look like in that context. It may be appropriate to award a lower mark to reflect the poor practice.

20. Where can I get further advice?

Ultimate responsibility for the University's Good Academic Practice policy lies with the Deans. Within each School, the Head of School and the Director of Teaching have responsibility for the implementation of the policy. However, for most issues the AMO will be the most appropriate first contact.

21. Where can students go for help?

The Academic Skills Advisor in the University's central Learning and Teaching Service (CAPOD) has produced guidance on how to avoid committing academic misconduct. This material is available online as a Moodle course called *Training in Good Academic Practice*. There are also links to various academic writing web sites from the Study Support area of the CAPOD web pages.

22. Where can I get more help?

The Deans of Arts and Science and the Pro-Deans are happy to give further guidance on any aspect of this policy and its implementation.

23. There are various useful sources of online guidance on plagiarism and other academic misconduct issues, collated and provided by CAPOD:

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/academic/advice/studyskillsandadvice/academicskills/>

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