TUTORIAL 3: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is often seen as being inextricably linked to plagiarism which frequently focuses on its detection and the subsequent penalties that may be imposed. However, more recent findings emphasise the need to prevent the incidence of plagiarism, which requires the development of students' sense of academic integrity (Birks et al., 2020).

3.1 Plagiarism

Ulster University defines plagiarism as the act of taking or copying someone else's work and presenting it as if it were one's own. Plagiarism occurs when ideas, texts, theories, data, created artistic artefacts or other materials are presented without appropriate acknowledgement. This means that the person considering this work is given the impression they are viewing the student's own original work when it is not the case.

Plagiarism can occur in various forms:

1. Copying – where a student actively copies the responses of another student during an exam but is presenting this as their own work.
2. Collusion – which involves the unauthorised collaboration of students on a piece of assessment that should otherwise represent an individual effort.
3. Personation – which involves someone assuming the identity of a student with the intent to deceive during an assessment by completing the work on behalf of the student.
4. Contract cheating – which involves a student engaging with and paying a third party to complete a piece of assessment on their behalf.
5. Covert use of AI generative tools – where AI generative tools are deployed for assessment purposes without authorisation and/or appropriate acknowledgement.
6. Auto-plagiarism – (or self-plagiarism) where a student's own previous work is re-presented without being properly referenced.

The Ulster University Academic Misconduct Policy outlines the framework of penalties for plagiarism offences:

Offence	Implication
1st	Reduction in marks based on exclusion of plagiarised work. Formative interview with module co-ordinator and/or lecturer.
2nd	Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism. Interview with Head of School and/or Course Director and/or lecturer. Formal letter of reprimand from Head of School. Copy placed on student file.
3rd	Mark of zero for assignment containing plagiarism and maximum mark of 40% (UG) or 50% (PG) for coursework element. Case referred to Dean with recommendation of reprimand and fine not exceeding the maximum amount permitted. Interview with Dean. Formal letter of reprimand from Dean. Copy placed on student file.
4th	Mark of zero for module. Case referred to University Disciplinary Committee with recommendation of suspension (1 semester or 1 year as advised by Faculty) or discontinuation of studies at the University. Outcome recorded on student file.

If plagiarism is detected after graduation, the award may be revoked.

3.2 Artificial intelligence (AI) – Guidance from Ulster University

The Ulster University Guidance on the use of AI "recognises that Generative AI tools may be used in reasonable ways and that they will evolve to become embedded in many of our workflows".

In their current state, reasonable use of the tools might be for:

1. Planning the structure of written work.
2. Developing creative ideas and inspiration.
3. Answering questions of web-based material.
4. Helping to improve writing skills.
5. Asking for an explanation of a topic.

Importantly, unless you are specifically asked to do so, you should avoid using Generative AI to create content for assessed coursework and research. The use of AI tools must not substitute your critical thinking, problem-solving skills and thought processes. Your work must be original and reflect your own informed perspective and understanding.

When using Generative AI technology, you are expected to exercise responsible and ethical practices. This includes:

1. Critically evaluating the outputs of AI generated content,
2. Understanding the limitations and potential biases of AI algorithms; and
3. Maintaining academic integrity by appropriately citing and acknowledging all sources.

Acknowledging the use of Generative AI tools

As an Ulster student, you are expected to comply with the University Regulations which include appropriate academic conduct. The Academic Misconduct Policy has been updated to explicitly reference the use of AI, and the student declaration for coursework submission states that:

I declare that this is all my own work.

Any material I have referred to has been accurately referenced and any contribution of Artificial Intelligence technology has been fully acknowledged.

I have read the University's policy on academic misconduct and understand the different forms of academic misconduct. If it is shown that material has been falsified, plagiarised, or I have otherwise attempted to obtain an unfair advantage for myself or others, I understand that I may face sanctions in accordance with the policies and procedures of the University.

A mark of zero may be awarded and the reason for that mark will be recorded on my file.

It is therefore not appropriate to misrepresent AI generated content as your own original work. Where content is used without being acknowledged, it will be considered as a form of academic misconduct (see Tutorial 4 for further discussion).

Where generative AI tools have been used for academic purposes, they must be acknowledged appropriately to ensure that any output is not misconstrued as the author's own work. Before students begin any piece of assessed work, they should be clear that the use of AI tools is authorised and appropriate as this practice may differ across modules and programmes of study.

3.3 Turnitin

Turnitin is an originality checking and plagiarism prevention service that checks your writing for citation mistakes or inappropriate copying. When you submit your assignment, Turnitin compares it to text in its massive database of student work, websites, books, articles, etc.

Turnitin is integrated into the assignments tool in Blackboard. This means that when you upload your assignment to your module area for grading, it will automatically be sent through Turnitin's repository. The resulting Similarity Report that it generates will help identify possible instances of plagiarism (see video, Tutorial 3).

References

Birks, M., Mills, J., Allen, S., Tee, S., (2020) Managing the mutations: academic misconduct in Australia, New Zealand and the UK. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 16:6. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-020-00055-5

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