

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).

The Academic Misconduct section of the University website outlines expectations for academic integrity and types of misconduct, including plagiarism, cheating, and misuse of AI tools:

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/student/courses/academic-misconduct>

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.

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).

3.4 Penalties for breaching academic integrity standards

Appendix 1 of the Student Academic Misconduct Procedure outlines the full framework of penalties for plagiarism offences.

In summary, if you are found to have breached academic integrity standards, the outcomes and penalties escalate depending on the severity of the offence:

1. You may be offered advice and guidance on avoiding future breaches.
2. You may be issued with a written warning.
3. The plagiarised material may be disregarded, with marks given for original content only.
4. Your mark may be capped at 40% for the assessment.
5. You may be given zero for the assessment, and your module mark may be capped at 40%.
6. The most serious cases will result in suspension or expulsion from the programme.

It is important that you are aware of the impact that academic misconduct can have on your University career, potential qualification and classification, and your future.

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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