

Advice and guidance for staff when dealing with assessment offences.

The following is a guide and is not exhaustive. It should be used alongside the [University regulations on assessment offences](#) (AST10) and the [Procedures for Assessment Offences and Research Misconduct](#). The university has also produced an extensive document aimed at [identifying and preventing academic misconduct, including plagiarism](#), which provides more detail and support.

Academic practice is a difficult skill that requires patience and time to develop, and one that can be fraught with pitfalls. Many students make mistakes as they develop their skills and require additional support and guidance to learn from these mistakes. Others may try to benefit by cheating. The University's procedures for managing assessment offences is in place to ensure that those students who need additional support are highlighted and are able to develop better practice, and to ensure that those who commit an assessment offence do not benefit from this and disadvantage others.

The following is a short guide to support staff who suspect a student has committed an assessment offence. This advice includes any formal University written assessment, but excludes exams and in-class tests.

The following are some selected examples (definitely not exhaustive!) to help you to identify if a student has committed an offence. Many students may accidentally commit an academic offence, but even if it was unintentional, it is still an offence. Below there is a flowchart outlining the process for managing a suspected offence once you are confident this is the right course of action. If you are ever unsure, contact your Module/Programme Lead and Faculty Registrar and they can support and advise you in this process.

How do I know if my student may have committed an academic offence?

Example 1) Aspects of the work have been copied from another source and have not been referenced.

This is the easiest one to manage. If the student has copied from another source and has not referenced this work, then they may have plagiarised and this should be passed onto the Module Lead for investigation.

Example 2) Aspects of the assessment have been copied from another source, but have been referenced (cited).

This one is a little more difficult. Though the student has copied chunks of text into their assessment, they have used quotation marks and it has been referenced (cited). Though this is poor academic practice, it doesn't necessarily constitute plagiarism. The student should be signposted to more support to develop their writing skills, particularly around paraphrasing and when it is appropriate to use quotes. If you are concerned that the quotes have not been appropriately referenced or referred to, and may constitute plagiarism, please refer this work to the module lead.

Example 3) Work from more than one student is very similar.

Students will often discuss work to try and understand what is required from an assessment, rather than with an intention to deceive. The difficulty is when this 'collaborative' discussion becomes

'collusion'. Again, it may still be an offence even if not intended. This can be particularly difficult to manage when setting groupwork, and it is vital that any criteria and expectations are outlined at the start of the module/assignment. If students share work with each other prior to marking, they may (even inadvertently) advantage one student over another and this constitutes collusion. Refer to the module lead for investigation.

Example 4) The work I have received is in a very different style to previous assessments from the student.

Changes in tone and style can be a helpful indicator that the work has not been appropriately referenced, paraphrased, has been copied, or commissioned (e.g. from an essay mill) etc. Refer to the module lead. It is helpful to also include previous examples of the student's work for comparison if available.

Example 5) I think that the essay I have received has been bought online.

Essay mills are an unfortunate reality of academic life. Students who are concerned about outcomes, or who are struggling in a particular area may feel that this is a pathway that is open to them. If you are concerned about a piece of work you have received, refer it to the module lead.

Example 6) The Turnitin score is very high, has the student committed an offence?

Turnitin is a useful tool, but is not a replacement for academic judgement. A high score does not in itself constitute plagiarism, and may indicate, for example, a high number of references, quotes, common technical lists &/or phrases common to a particular topic. Has the student used a lot of quotations, but struggled to paraphrase in their own words (see above)? Check the report carefully, and include it in the information for the module lead if you suspect an academic offence may have occurred

[I think my student has committed an academic offence, should I cap their mark?](#)

The easy answer here is No. If you think there has been an academic offence, you should refer the work to the module lead, who in discussion with the Faculty Registrar or nominee will determine whether an academic offences Panel is required. If the Panel decide that an offence has been committed, they will agree on a penalty, which may include mark capping. No mark capping should be carried out without the decision of the academic offences Panel.

[I suspect an academic offence, should the marks and feedback for that assessment be released to the student?](#)

Again – No. The marks and feedback can be released to the remainder of the cohort, but the marks and feedback for the student who is currently undergoing investigation for an academic offence should not be released as these may need to be updated in light of the investigation. The student should be informed (by the module lead or FR), that they will receive their marks and feedback as soon as possible following the outcome of the academic offence investigation.

I suspect a student of committing an academic offence, should I contact the Faculty Registrar directly to arrange an academic offences panel?

No. The responsibility for carrying out the initial investigation for an academic offence lies with the module lead. Any suspected academic offence should be referred to them first. They will then investigate the situation and discuss this with the FR to determine whether an academic offence panel is required.

