

Regent College London

Academic Misconduct Student Guide

1 Aim of this guide

The aim of this guide is to help you understand what academic misconduct is and what you should do to avoid it. The main types of academic misconduct are explained in this guide. If a lecturer suspects that a student has committed academic misconduct, it will be investigated and a penalty imposed if it is found that you have committed an academic misconduct offence. Regent College London's procedure for establishing that academic misconduct has occurred, and what action will be taken, is also described in this student guide¹.

It is hoped that you will find the student guide informative and help you to avoid committing an academic misconduct offence.

2 What is academic misconduct?

Academic misconduct relates to academic work (all forms of assessed work) that does not meet the normal and accepted standards of academic practice. Normal standards of academic practice state that in all assessed work students should take care to ensure that the work presented is their own and that it fully acknowledges the work and opinion of others. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that they do not undertake any form of cheating or attempt to gain unfair advantage in any other way. Types of academic misconduct include:

- copying text or images without acknowledging the source
- passing off someone else's work or ideas as your own
- submitting work which has been produced by someone else, for example, using a ghost writing service
- submitting assessed work meant to be your own on which others have collaborated
- cheating in examinations
- making up a research project and data
- falsifying signatures on consent forms.

3 Why does academic misconduct occur?

Academic misconduct may be intentional or unintentional. It may happen unintentionally because, for example, a student misunderstands the rules of referencing. However, penalties for academic misconduct may be applied even if it was not intended. In consequence, it is very important that students have a clear understanding of what is and what is not acceptable academic practice when submitting assignments for assessment and when taking examinations.

¹ Please note that if you are a student on a course with the award made by one of our university partners you will need to adhere to their policy and procedures for academic misconduct, which is available from their website or the relevant Programme Handbook

4 How does Regent College London deal with academic misconduct?

There are a number of reasons why academic misconduct may be suspected. For example, a lecturer may notice that a student's work is similar to that of another student, or be inconsistent in style and use of vocabulary. Use of Turnitin, a standard requirement at the College, can show how similar a student's work is to other work or sources. Students can also use Turnitin to check their own work for similarity checks and referencing errors. You must bear in mind that the Turnitin similarity report has to be interpreted and some guidelines will be given to you over this².

If academic misconduct is suspected, the lecturer or assessor will bring the alleged misconduct to the attention of the Cohort Leader, in accordance with the College's Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures. The Cohort Leader will convene an Academic Misconduct Hearing, usually within twenty working days of the allegation being reported. The panel to hear the academic misconduct allegation will consist of the Cohort Leader, a Programme Leader/Director of Studies and the Head of Academic Standards & Quality Enhancement (or nominee).

If, following presentation of evidence at the Academic Misconduct Hearing, you deny that academic misconduct has taken place, you may appeal against the decision over academic misconduct, according to the College's policy and procedure. This may result in a panel being convened to hear your case.

Please remember that it is the responsibility of the member(s) of staff at the College who suspects academic misconduct to provide objective evidence to support the allegation. Without supporting evidence an allegation of academic misconduct cannot be formally investigated using the College's Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure.

5 What are the penalties for academic misconduct?

If it is decided that academic misconduct has taken place the Academic Misconduct Hearing panel will recommend to the relevant Assessment Board what penalty to apply. There are a range of penalties which relate to the level of study being undertaken by the student and the seriousness of the academic misconduct. There are more serious penalties for second and subsequent offences, and for students in later stages of their course and at postgraduate level.

Penalties range from a referral for the piece of assessed work or the whole Unit, through to the student being required to withdraw from the course and the College.

6 Common types of academic misconduct

(a) Plagiarism

This is defined as the unacknowledged incorporation in a student's work of material derived from the work (published or unpublished) of another. Examples include:

- the inclusion in a student's work of more than a single phrase from another person's work without the use of quotation marks and acknowledgement of the sources
- the summarising of another person's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement
- the use of the ideas of another person without acknowledgement of the source
- the unacknowledged use of images (digital or otherwise) music, patents or other creative material either in the entirety or in the creation of a derivative work

² See the Student Handbook: Academic Good Practice and How to avoid Plagiarism

- unacknowledged resubmission of work that you have previously submitted to gain academic credit at this University or elsewhere.

Common errors made by students

- Taking sentences from one source and mixing them up with sentences from another source to produce what the student considers to be a novel piece of text (patch-writing).
- Rearranging order of words/sentences, changing verbs/adjectives.
- Copying large pieces of text and referencing - this is poor academic practice because it does not demonstrate understanding or analysis of the material.
- Incorporating images or sound (perhaps music) found on the internet into an assignment without acknowledging the source (even if correctly referenced, copyright may be infringed).

Avoiding plagiarism

In assessed work, you need to show that you have considered relevant sources and can explain what you have learned using your own words.

- First gather together the sources that you wish to refer to in your assignment
- Read them and jot down notes on what you think the author of each book chapter, article or web-page is saying.
- At this stage, put the original sources away and begin to write your essay or report using your own words, referring back to the original sources only if you are looking for quotes to include (which you should reference).
- Reference all sources appropriately (including when using other's ideas but using your own words) both in-text and in your references section.
- Never 'copy and paste' any text from an original source into your own work.

(b) Collusion

This is where assessment work is submitted as your own but has not been completed independently. Copying the work of another student, with or without their knowledge or agreement, counts as plagiarism. If the work has been copied with the permission of the other student, this becomes collusion and both students are committing academic misconduct. Examples are where a student:

- submits work, that has been done in collaboration with another person, as being entirely their own work
- collaborates with another student in the completion of work which is submitted as that student's own work.
- permits another student to copy all or part of their own work and to submit it as their own work; both students will be penalised.

Common errors that students make

- Thinking that if they have completed a project as part of a group, they can work together to write it up – you may discuss an assessment task, but it must be written independently unless stated otherwise.
- Misunderstanding group work assessment requirements – you should be clear on the requirements for independent and group submission.

Avoiding collusion

- It is acceptable for you to share resources with your fellow students, such as interesting or relevant papers and /or articles that you come across
- You should not give another student your preparation notes, as that student may then use your work and pass it off as their own.
- You should not give another student a copy of work that you submit for assessment - if they use it for their assessment you will be implicated for academic misconduct.

(c) Other forms of academic misconduct

Ghosting is where a student uses another person or other people to write part or all of their assessed work, for example, using a 'ghost writing' service. Any student providing such a service will also commit academic misconduct.

This also applies if a student makes material available to another student, whether in exchange for financial gain or otherwise, with the intention that the material is to be used to commit academic misconduct.

Falsification is falsifying or making up data or information. This includes presentation of data in laboratory reports, projects or other forms of assessment based on experimental or other work falsely purported to have been carried out by the student, or obtained by unfair means. Another example is the falsification of references, including the invention of references and/or false claims.

Personation is the legal term for impersonation. If, for example, you have someone sit an examination for you, both parties commit academic misconduct.

Cheating in an examination.

Note: Where intention to deceive is evident, academic misconduct is treated very seriously and penalties applied will reflect this.

7. Advice and help

Your first source of help and advice should be your lecturer, Unit Leader, or Programme Leader/Director of Studies. If you are unsure on any matter, ask your lecturer – they are there to help!

Your induction programme when you first start your course at Regent College London and your Student Handbook also provide help and guidance on both normal standards of academic practice and academic misconduct. Regent College London's Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure is available on the VLE (HELP) and the website (<http://www.regentcollegelondon.com/our-college/policies/>).

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