

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT 2019-20

Academic misconduct is defined by the University as the use of unfair means in any University assessment. This includes assisting a student to make use of unfair means, and doing anything prejudicial to the good conduct of the assessment. Examples of misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, self-plagiarism (that is, submitting the same work for credit twice at the same or different institutions), collusion, falsification, cheating (including contract cheating, where a student pays for work to be written or edited by somebody else), deceit, and personation (that is, impersonating another student or allowing another person to impersonate a student in an assessment).

Plagiarism is the most common form of academic misconduct affecting student assessments. Plagiarism can include using not only the words, but also the ideas & structure from the work of others, without acknowledgment. The University of Edinburgh considers plagiarism to be **intentional or unintentional**. Ignorance is not a defence, therefore it is essential that all students know the rules including;

1. REFERENCING YOUR SOURCES

- It is essential you learn how to use an appropriate referencing system (e.g. Harvard, APA etc.) & follow the agreed way to acknowledge sources on your programme and courses.
- You must fully acknowledge all sources in your written work. This includes material from lectures and seminars, shared learning & online sources. Failure to do so is to present other people's work as if it is your own.
- Cite the sources you have accessed in full and consulted directly; these are called 'primary sources'.
- Citations within the primary sources you have read are 'secondary sources'. Citing these without consulting them directly is referred to as 'secondary citation'. This is not an honest representation of your own academic efforts, reading & understanding.
- On the rare occasion an essential source cannot be accessed in full, secondary citation is acceptable by acknowledging both the secondary source & the primary source citing it (e.g. "...X cited in Y...").
- If choosing to follow a structure you have found elsewhere (e.g. a document, a questionnaire), this should be stated clearly and referenced at the outset.

2. SELECTING YOUR SOURCES

- It is essential you are aware of what are, and what are not, appropriate sources to use for different items of academic work.
- Other student work should never be used as a source unless explicitly advocated by course organisers as appropriate (e.g. group work); on these occasions the source must still be acknowledged in order to represent your own work honestly. Similarly, do not allow other students to access your written work.
- Students cannot ordinarily re-use their own material for an assessment if any content has already been submitted for credit on another course or assessment; this is deceit and termed 'self-plagiarism'. Occasionally similarities may be unavoidable in parts of 'linked' assessments such as a research proposal & dissertation; the course organisers concerned will be aware of this and will advise.

3. WRITING IN YOUR OWN WORDS

- It is essential that you develop the ability to write in your own words.
- Other people's ideas & writing should be carefully rewritten & expressed in your own original words as well as being correctly referenced.
- Your notetaking must allow you to distinguish which words and ideas are yours & which belong to others; losing track of the origin could mean unreferenced, verbatim (word-for-word) material being unintentionally included in your work.
- Blocks of copied text should not be reused verbatim or with minor adjustments. Close paraphrasing (e.g. rearranging & substituting existing words) is considered plagiarism - even when referenced correctly.
- Verbatim "quotations" can be used sparingly to illustrate your arguments. However these must be both referenced & set in quotation marks to be explicit about where other people's words begin & end.
- Submitting work written by other people, including material downloaded from online essay repositories or purchased online are never appropriate; this is cheating.

If you are uncertain about any of the content above you should discuss this with your personal tutor

OTHER TYPES OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Although plagiarism is the most common type of academic misconduct there are other behaviours too including collusion, falsification, cheating, deceit and personation; basically any kind of dishonest behaviour used in the pursuit of academic credit or award.

- University of Edinburgh information on academic misconduct:
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/conduct/academic-misconduct/what-is-academic-misconduct>

WHAT HAPPENS IN MISCONDUCT CASES?

It is academic staff who identify cases of academic misconduct; this usually occurs during the process of marking and may involve tools such as Turnitin. Suspected academic misconduct cases are then discussed with the School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO) who makes a decision about the seriousness of the case based on the nature and the extent of the issues. Serious cases of academic misconduct can result in severe penalties to course marks. Students should be aware that a penalty on just one course mark can prevent progression and even prevent the award of a degree.

- University of Edinburgh procedures for investigating academic misconduct are available:
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/academic-misconduct>

WHAT ABOUT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES?

We are sympathetic towards the personal/health difficulties sometimes faced by students; however, these cannot excuse academic misconduct. At worst, it is preferable to miss a deadline than to submit work that is ethically compromised. There are effective support mechanisms in place to assist students who find that personal/health pressures are jeopardising their academic performance. These include extensions, special circumstances and disability adjustments – these should be accessed.

WHERE CAN I SEEK HELP, ADVICE & INFORMATION

All students should make themselves fully aware of the rules on academic misconduct. If you have any questions about coursework, assessments and good academic practice, you should speak to academic staff. Programme Directors, Course Organisers, your Personal Tutor, and your School Academic Misconduct Officer, are there to advise you. Your Personal Tutor can also offer guidance on effective study and essay writing skills. The following information is relevant to all students at the University of Edinburgh

- CiteThemRight is a comprehensive online guide to the mechanics of citation for different referencing styles and is accessible to all UoE students (EASE login needed)
<https://www-citethemrightonline-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/>
- Institute of Academic Development (IAD) has various resources on good academic practice & study skills:
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/undergraduate/good-practice>
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/study-hub>
- EU Students Association (EUSA) webpages have helpful information:
https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support_and_advice/the_advice_place/academic/citeright/