OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR ACADEMIC WRITING 2023-24

Understanding our expectations will benefit your learning & help avoid academic misconduct

Knowing what is expected in academic work will help you demonstrate good academic practice and avoid problems such as academic misconduct. Plagiarism is the most common form of student academic misconduct and includes using the words, images & other media, or ideas & structure from the work of others, without acknowledgment.

Academic misconduct is taken seriously by the university; it is not acceptable behaviour and can put your academic career at risk. The University does not distinguish between intentional and unintentional academic misconduct. Therefore, it is important that ALL students understand what is expected for their academic work at university. Understanding the following general expectations is a good place to start and will help avoid plagiarism. Your Programme of study may also supplement this with more specific guidance in relation to your subject area.

1. WRITING IN YOUR OWN WORDS
You are expected to develop the ability to write in your own words

1.1. Other people's ideas & writing should be communicated in your own original words (your own 'voice') based on your own understanding (as well as being referenced correctly).

1.2. Blocks of text should not be copied and reused either verbatim or with minor adjustments. Close paraphrasing (e.g. rearranging & substituting existing words) is still considered plagiarism even when referenced correctly.

1.3. The only time that copied verbatim text can be used is when it is presented as a "direct quotation" both referenced correctly AND enclosed in quotation marks to show where other people's words begin & end.

1.4. Your notetaking must distinguish your words and ideas from those that belong to others; losing track of the origin could mean unreferenced, verbatim material being transferred into your submitted work unintentionally.

1.5. Obtaining work written by other people and submitting it as if it were your own is never appropriate; this is considered cheating irrespective of whether it was purchased via an 'essay mill' or not.

1.6. Submitting any automatically generated content is not acceptable as it is not your own words. This includes use of translation tools, paraphrasing tools or AI content generation tools such as ChatGPT; ask if you are unsure.

1.7. Input from a third-party proof reader is acceptable but must be restricted to minor edits & comments aimed at improving the clarity of written English, and must adhere to our University guidance on use of a proof reader.

2. SELECTING YOUR SOURCES
You are expected to be aware of what are, and what are not, appropriate sources for each assessment

2.1. Other student work must not be used as a source unless explicitly advocated by course organiser (e.g. group work); on these occasions the source must still be acknowledged to represent your own work honestly.

2.2. Online repositories of 'sample essays' should not be used and are often connected to essay mill activities.

2.3. Students who share their work with others are facilitating cheating; this is academic misconduct. Even the sharing of personal notes can lead to similarities in student work that represent plagiarism or collusion.

2.4. Do not re-use any material previously submitted for another course or assessment, either at Edinburgh or at another institution as this is considered 'self-plagiarism'. Some 'linked' assessments may legitimately share content (e.g. research proposal & dissertation), the course organisers will be aware of this and will advise.

3. REFERENCING YOUR SOURCES
You are expected to be able to use an appropriate referencing system (e.g. Harvard, APA etc.) & follow the agreed way to acknowledge (cite) sources on your programme & courses

3.1. Reference all sources used in submitted work; not just academic publications, but also other sources (e.g. web pages, teaching resources). Failure to do so is to present other people's work as if it is your own.

3.2. Reference the sources you have accessed in full & consulted directly; these are called 'primary sources'.

3.3. References within 'primary sources' you have read are called 'secondary sources'. Referencing these without reading them is termed 'secondary citation'. This is not a fair representation of your research and reading.

3.4. 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...").

3.5. If choosing to replicate or adapt the structure of a document found elsewhere (e.g. a questionnaire), this should be stated clearly and referenced at the outset.

UNDERSTAND WHAT'S EXPECTED – ASK FOR HELP – AVOID ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

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 assessment 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).

- University of Edinburgh information on academic misconduct includes guidance on proofreading, Turnitin, affirmation meetings and use of generative AI
https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/conduct/academic-misconduct/what-is-academic-misconduct

WHAT HAPPENS IN ACADEMIC 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 decides about the seriousness of the case based on the nature and the extent of the issues. Serious cases of academic misconduct can result in mark penalties. 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/students/conduct/academic-misconduct/academic-misconduct-procedure

WHAT ABOUT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES OVER WHICH I HAVE NO CONTROL?

We are sympathetic towards the personal/health difficulties sometimes faced by students; however, these cannot excuse academic misconduct. There are many 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. We encourage students to speak to their Student Adviser for information on how to apply for these. It is preferable to miss a deadline than to submit work that is ethically compromised – depending on the situation, many of the above support mechanisms can be accepted late.

WHERE CAN I SEEK HELP, ADVICE & INFORMATION

All students should make themselves fully aware of the expectation on academic misconduct. If you have any questions about coursework, assessments and good academic practice, you should speak to academic staff. Your Student Adviser, Academic Cohort Lead, Programme Directors, Course Organisers, and your School Academic Misconduct Officer, are there to advise you. Your Academic Cohort Lead 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/

- EU Students Association (EUSA) webpages have helpful information:
https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/academic/misconduct