

Test your understanding of academic integrity and academic misconduct: Scenarios



Quick Guide

Practising academic integrity: everyday decisions and judgments

Practising academic integrity during your studies is an everyday thing. It involves making careful judgments and decisions about how you go about your studies, and complete assignments and exams.

This resource has been devised as an opportunity for students to test their understanding of student academic integrity. It is important to read the following Quick Guides before working your way through the scenarios below:

Student academic integrity: an introduction

Student academic misconduct: an introduction

Remember, it is your responsibility, as a student of Southern Cross University, to submit your own work for assessment, and clearly show when use the others' work in your writing. Referencing is the usual method used at university to indicate use of others' work.

Questions to ask while working through these scenarios

As you work through the scenarios keep asking yourself the four questions listed below. These questions will help you to judge the situation, and decide the correct course of action.

Double check your responses in the 'answers' section at the end of this resource.

1. Have I put in the work expected of me to complete to the assessment task?
2. Am I submitting my own work?
3. Have I scrupulously acknowledged the use others' work?
4. Is it clear where my work ends and others' work begins?

Scenario one

You have been working steadily on the assignment for the last week and it is due tomorrow. To write the assignment you accessed many journal articles, e-books and web sites. You feel your research is strong, and you have devoted a lot of time to completing the assignment.

When writing the assignment your strategy was to copy and paste sections from sources straight into your essay plan. Then you came back and:

- paraphrased the cut and paste sections by putting the meaning of the original source into your own words,
- acknowledged you were using others' work by referencing.

The problem is, you have just noticed there are four paragraphs in your essay where you have copied and pasted sections of a source, but have not gone back to paraphrase or provide references. You can tell these sections are not your own writing because the font is different, and the writing style is more dense and complicated than your own.

At this point you have no idea where these copied sections come from. You have used many sources in your essay. There is no time to go and track down the original sources or their referencing details now.

What is in this guide

- Practising academic integrity: everyday decisions and judgments
- Student academic integrity: a snap-shot
- Student academic misconduct: a snap-shot
- Questions to ask when faced with real life situations or scenarios about academic integrity
- Work your way through scenarios
- Check your responses to scenarios
- Tips to follow when faced with academic integrity challenges during your studies
- Related Quick Guides

You decide to leave the cut and paste sections in your assignment but do not reference them. You are hoping the marker does not notice, or thinks you wrote the words yourself. Is this OK?

- a) This is OK because you have put in lots of effort and other sections in your essay are properly referenced.
- b) This is NOT OK because you are not scrupulously showing when you use others' work, and you are not clearly showing where your work ends and others' work begins.
- c) This is OK because your tutor is an expert in the field and will recognise when you use others' work.

Scenario two

You are a new student and finding university study challenging. Your family is interested in your studies, and really proud of your achievements. All through your life your parents and sisters have helped you with your studies, you discuss your classes and assignments at the dinner table every night.

You enjoy sharing the new ideas and **information** you are learning at university with your family, and you find talking about assignments with your sisters helps you to better understand the topic. You also find it is helpful to read your final drafts of assignments out-loud so that your family can tell you if it makes sense and flows well. Is it OK to get this type of support from your family?

- a) It is NOT OK to get this kind of support from your family. You cannot discuss assignments or get feedback on assignments because it needs to be all your own effort.
- b) It is OK to talk about your studies and assignments with others, including your family. We often deepen our understanding by talking to others and hearing other points of view.
- c) It is a good idea to include your family in your studies, including discussing new ideas and assignments so long as you write the assignment yourself.
- d) Both B and C.

Scenario three

You successfully completed first session at university, but second session is proving more challenging. Your friends are feeling the same way and have organised a weekly study group to revise lecture notes, complete set (homework) activities, discuss assignments, and prepare for exams. Talking about ideas taught in the course, and sharing your ideas about upcoming assignments has been very helpful. Meeting regularly with fellow students has also helped to increase your motivation levels and you have made some really good friends.

Everyone in the study group works at least 20 hours a week and studies full time. There are six regular members in your study group and you all have different tutors. To save time and get assignments submitted by the due date you have all agreed to pitch in and write the upcoming report together, and then submit it as your own work. You have all contributed a section to the assignment and you now have time to move onto an assignment in another unit. Is this OK?

- a) It is great to form a study group and share ideas but co-writing the assignment is NOT OK. Unless it is a group-work assessment task you need to write the assignment yourself.
- b) It is OK to co-write the assignment and submit it as your own work because you all contributed a section.
- c) It is not OK to co-write an assignment and submit it as your own work because you are not putting in the effort expected, and you are not clearly showing where your work ends and others' work begins.
- d) Both A and C.

Scenario four

You have been struggling to finish a big assignment which is now due tomorrow. You are feeling very stressed and overwhelmed. Your father wants to ease your stress and give you help. He volunteers to take your notes and essay plan and write the assignment for you.

You have completed hours of research for the assignment, and have generated very good notes and a strong essay plan. Is it OK to let your father write the assignment for you and submit the essay as your own work?

- a) It's OK for your father to write the assignment because you completed the research and generated the essay plan.
- b) It's OK for your father to write your assignment this one time because you are feeling very stressed.

- c) It's NOT OK for your father to write the assignment. It is your responsibility to put in the effort required and submit your own work for assessment.

Scenario five

You have been working hard on an assignment that is due tonight. You have submitted your final draft for originality checking and find there are quite a few matches where you have paraphrased sources. You know that paraphrases have to put the meaning of the source into your own words. However, when you look at the originality report you see that you have just changed a word or two and left the phrasing (wording) pretty much the same.

You know you should go back and improve the paraphrases by re-wording so that you keep the meaning of the original source, while change the phrasing (wording)-but you don't have time. You have referenced the paraphrases to show you are using others' work.

It is OK to leave the poor paraphrases and submit the work as it is?

- a) Yes, it is fine to leave poor phrases and submit the assignment.
b) No, it is not OK to submit an assignment containing poor paraphrases.

Scenario six

You have an essay due and you are struggling to get started writing. You have heard that Academic Skills Development (ASD) staff can help you to organise the structure and style of your writing. Would it be OK to book a consultation to discuss your assignment with someone at ASD?

- a) Yes, it is OK to consult with ASD staff about your assignment.
b) No, it is not OK to consult with ASD staff about your assignment.

Scenario seven

You are working on a 2000 word group work report with three other students. The assignment is awarded a group mark (everyone in the group gets the same grade). By completing the assignment students are expected to learn how to divide up roles and responsibilities, and manage a project to meet deadlines. Each student is expected to research one aspect of the assigned topic, and write one quarter of the finished report (500 words).

Your team has met three times about the group report and each member has been allocated an area to research. The assignment is due in four days and one team member, Ashe, has not managed to start their research because of work commitments. You know it is hard to juggle work and study, but you also want a good grade for this assignment. Ashe has asked you to write her section of the report so that the group can submit on time and get a good grade. Is it OK to do this?

- a) Yes.
b) No.

Scenario eight

You need to work part-time to support yourself while studying. Your boss has asked you to increase your work hours from 20 hours a week to 35 hours a week because things are so busy. As a result you have fallen behind in your studies and have just realised an essay is due in 2 days.

Your friend completed the same unit last year and he has given you his old assignment. The assignment asks you to devise a marketing strategy for a small business.

You know about academic integrity and have decided to research a **different small business**. You have:

- copied the first 4 paragraphs at the start of the assignment where your friend has defined key concepts and described two marketing strategies for small businesses
- copied the conclusions and recommendations, but changed the name of the business.

The middle of the assignment (about half of the entire word length) is all your own work. Is this OK?

- a) Yes.
b) No.

Check your responses: Answers to scenarios

Answers to scenario one

If you answered A or C to scenario one TRY AGAIN. Response B is correct.

It is never OK to present others' work as your own at university. Deliberately cutting and pasting sections from a source **without referencing** is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious form of academic misconduct which can carry significant penalties.

It is not your tutor's responsibility to recognise and identify direct quotations (word for word extracts) included in your writing. It is your responsibility to carefully show when you use others' words in your assignments.

In APA 6th referencing style short direct quotations are put in double inverted commas (to show that you are including others' words in your writing) and referencing details include author name, year of publication and page number. Direct quotes are inserted into sentences. Naming the author of the direct quotation in the sentence is an extra way to acknowledge you are using someone else's words in your writing.

Answers to scenario two

If you selected response A to scenario one TRY AGAIN. Responses B & C are CORRECT.

It is fine to discuss your studies and assignments with others, including your family, friends and other students. Talking to others about your assignments and reading drafts out-loud to get feedback are both good strategies to help you better understand the assignment, and improve your writing.

In this scenario you practise academic integrity by putting in the effort required to complete the assignment and writing the assignment yourself (submitting your own work).

Answers to scenario three

If you selected responses A, C, or D to scenario three you are CORRECT. If you selected response B you need to TRY AGAIN.

This is a tricky scenario.

Remember, study groups and closely collaborating about your studies and assignments is strongly encouraged at university. Teachers encourage students to work together and have detailed discussions about the ideas and approaches taught in the unit, and their understanding of unit materials, and assessment tasks. It is important to understand that at university, sharing **ideas** and **approaches** to assignments is encouraged. However, discussing ideas and understandings is not the same as writing the assignment together.

The students in this scenario have **co-written the assignment** (writing a section each) even though it was not a group work (collaborative) assessment task.

The students have breached academic integrity because they have not:

- put in the effort required to complete the assignment
- carefully shown where they use others' work
- clearly shown where their work ends and others' work begins.

By signing or ticking the originality declaration when submitting the essay, each of the four students declared the assignment was their own piece of work, even though they only wrote part of it (500 words of a 2000 word essay). This conduct is understood as academic dishonesty at university. It is a serious breach of academic integrity called collusion.

It is not only that serious penalties can apply to acts of collusion. These students have also missed out on learning opportunities. They might have cheated themselves out of learning important ideas, skills and capacities needed to perform their future professional role.

Answers to scenario four

If you selected responses A or B to scenario four you need to TRY AGAIN. Response C is CORRECT.

Even though your father is trying to help you, it is not OK for him to write the assignment even if you have completed the research and the essay plan. Allowing your father to write the assignment for you would breach academic integrity. This is because:

- you need to put in the effort required to complete assignments
- you need to clearly show where your work ends and others' work begins.

In this scenario it would be appropriate to discuss your assignment with your father, and read it out loud to him to get his feed-back. However, it is not OK for your father to write your assignment for you, and then you submit the essay as if it is your own work.

Answers to scenario five

If you selected a) YES to scenario five you need to TRY AGAIN.

Submitting poor paraphrases means you take credit for someone else's words.

Paraphrases are where you put the meaning of the source into **your own words**. By just changing a couple of words in the original source you present direct quotations (word for word extracts) as if they are paraphrases. That is, you present someone else's words as if they are your own words.

If you answered b) NO to scenario two you are CORRECT. It is NOT OK to just change a word or two when paraphrasing sources, even if you reference. Just changing a word or two in paraphrases is a kind of plagiarism called 'plagiarising', a common but serious form of student academic misconduct.

In this scenario, if you didn't have time to re-word the paraphrases it would have been better to honestly include sources as direct quotations. Doing this would scrupulously acknowledge when you use others' work, and clearly show where your work ends and others work begins.

Answers to scenario six

The correct answer to scenario six is YES. Getting support with your assignment is OK. The ASD staff member can help you to develop academic writing skills, but they cannot assist with the content of the assignment. This means you still put in the effort expected to complete the assignment, and the work and ideas remain your own.

If you answered No to scenario six **you need to TRY AGAIN.** It is fine to access support from ASD staff. You will still be submitting your own work and ideas for assessment. ASD staff can help you to put your ideas in the appropriate format, but you write the assignment yourself.

Answers to scenario seven

If you answered YES to scenario seven you need to TRY AGAIN.

Writing Ashe's section of the report would be breach academic integrity and both you and Ashe could face serious penalties.

Ashe needs to honestly put in the effort expected to complete the work herself. Also, in this scenario it would not be clear to the marker where your work ends and other's work begins.

If you answered NO to scenario seven you are correct. Ashe should research her section of the topic, and submit her own work for assessment. Completing the work of class mate and allowing them to submit it as their own work is NOT OK. This is collusion and carries significant penalties at SCU.

This is a difficult situation. Even if you feel sorry for a class mate it is important not to risk academic misconduct. The best course of action in this situation is to get in touch with your tutor or unit assessor and explain the situation faced by the group. Your teachers are then responsible for finding a solution that is fair to the group.

Answers to scenario eight

If you answered YES to scenario eight you need to TRY AGAIN. Doing this would be a serious breach of academic integrity. It is not OK to copy someone else's work and submit it as your own work. Even if you only copy sections of the assignment and write the rest yourself it is still NOT OK.

It would not be clear to the marker where your work ends and others' work begins. In effect, you would take credit for someone else's work. You would not have scrupulously shown where you use others' work, and you would not have put in the effort expected to complete the assignment.

Both you and your friend would have committed collusion, a serious form of academic misconduct which carries serious penalties.

If you answered NO to scenario eight you are CORRECT.

It is not OK to copy even a section of a fellow student's assignment. Doing so is collusion, a serious type of academic misconduct. You must always honestly put in the effort expected, scrupulously show when you use other's work, and clearly show where your work ends and others' work begins.

Related Quick Guides

Student academic integrity: An introduction, Student academic misconduct: An introduction, Student academic integrity: Know your rights and responsibilities, Practising academic integrity: An introduction to referencing