

What is student academic misconduct?

Student academic misconduct is a general term used to describe breaches of academic integrity by enrolled students. It involves claiming credit for someone else's work, or allowing others to claim credit for your work.

The SCU Academic Misconduct policy was updated in 2017 and this resulted in a change to the definition of academic misconduct. As a result, student intention is no longer a factor when determining academic misconduct. This means **it does not matter whether students deliberately or unintentionally engage in academic misconduct**. After all, it is impossible to know student intentions. What **counts as evidence** during investigations of suspected academic misconduct **are the actions of the student(s) and the work submitted for grading**.

Academic Skills Quick Guide

SCU takes an educative approach

SCU understands that none of us are born knowing how to write university assignments, and that academic integrity and academic misconduct can be mysterious ideas at first. This is why SCU takes an 'educative approach' to academic integrity. This means the focus is on equipping students with the skills and understanding needed to write in their discipline(s). The idea is that via education students are empowered to practise academic integrity and avoid academic misconduct.

The 'educative approach' taken at SCU means your teachers have a responsibility to provide you with guidance about how to write in your discipline and practise academic integrity. At the same time, students are expected to be pro-active, read SCU policy, and use guidance to become well equipped to avoid academic misconduct

Understanding penalties

At SCU penalties for academic misconduct can include:

- resubmitting the assessment task
- losing some marks for the affected assessment task
- being awarded zero marks for the affected assessment task
- failing the unit
- being excluded from the course.

Factors taken into account when SCU penalties for academic misconduct are decided:

Academic misconduct can result in serious penalties that most students want to avoid. A number of factors are taken into consideration when penalties are allocated including:

- the study experience of the student
- the seriousness of the misconduct
- whether the student has previously committed academic misconduct.

The educative approach taken at SCU means the goal is always to assist students to learn how to practise academic integrity, and avoid academic misconduct in the future.

Academic misconduct can affect much more than your grades

While academic misconduct can result in penalties and reduced grades, there is more at stake. To understand the wide-ranging impacts of academic misconduct we need to go back to academic integrity, and understand why it is so highly valued. We need to remember that **universities are places of learning**. As a result, academic misconduct (e.g. a breach of academic integrity) is viewed as **undermining student learning**, potentially leaving **graduates without the skills, capacities, and understandings they need to perform their future professional role**. This is because student assessment is designed to **drive learning**, not just evaluate it.

Six potential impacts of student academic misconduct

1. **For the student:** buying essays online, cheating in exams, copying sections from a peer, or recycling assignments, or cheating during an exam, students cheat themselves of the opportunity to **learn key skills and content understanding needed to carry out their future professional role**.
2. **For student employment prospects:** a record of academic misconduct during university studies can be construed by future employers as detracting from 'good character'.
3. **For ALL students:** courses can gain a negative reputation among employers when graduates are unable to perform their professional role as a result of academic misconduct (e.g. cheating themselves out of learning important theory or skills by buying assignments or cheating in exams). Negative course reputation can affect even those students who diligently practiced academic integrity during their studies.
4. **For the University:** the reputation of university can gain be damaged because it **guarantees graduate qualifications** to employers and the wider community
5. **For employers:** if graduates do not possess the understanding or skills needed to perform their professional role.
6. **For the community:** because they need to be able to trust in the competency of professionals with suitable qualifications.

Four common types of academic misconduct

The remainder of this guide outlines four types of academic misconduct and how to **avoid** these practices during your studies. Make sure you read the [SCU Academic Misconduct Guidelines](#).

Cheating

The idea of cheating will be familiar from school as poor behaviour that breaks the rules and should be avoided. Cheating is also seen as dishonest conduct at university.

Examples of cheating:

- copying the work of fellow students in exams
- breaking examination rules (e.g. bringing in notes to a closed-book exam)
- getting someone else to sit the exam in your place.

To avoid cheating:

- read and carefully follow examination rules
- put in the effort expected of you to complete the exam.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves taking credit for others' ideas, claims, findings, examples, data, words, images, or sounds. This can happen when sloppy paraphrasing (e.g. too close to the original wording) and/or poor referencing make it **unclear to the reader where your work ends and others' work begins**.

Examples of plagiarism

The following examples of plagiarism need to be avoided:

- buying an essay online and submitting it for grading as your own work
- using ideas, information or words (direct quotes) from sources without referencing
- inconsistent and incorrect referencing
- poor paraphrasing too close to the original wording
- buying an essay and submitting it as your own work
- getting a family member or friend to write part, or all, of an assignment.

To avoid plagiarism:

- use referencing to clearly show the reader where your work ends, and others' work begins
- when paraphrasing put the meaning of sources into your own words (**DON'T** just change a few words)
- correctly format and reference direct quotes (according to set referencing style guide).

Recycling

Recycling happens when a student re-submits an assignment, or parts of an assignment that has **already been submitted for grading** in a previous study session or different unit.

Recycling is academic misconduct because the student:

- has not put in the effort expected of them to complete the assignment
- is 'double-dipping' by getting credit towards their qualification more than once for the **same piece of work**.

Examples of recycling:

- submitting sections from an assignment that you wrote for a different unit
- re-submitting the same assignment you submitted for grading last time you enrolled in the unit (e.g. if you are re-taking the same unit).

In some disciplines (including Creative Writing) assignments are sometimes designed so that students submit a draft as an early assessment task, get feedback from the marker, and then submit an improved version for the next assessment task. This is **not** considered recycling. **If you are unsure, always talk to your tutor.**

Collusion

Collusion involves a student presenting another students' work as their own. **Both** the student who lets their work be copied, and the student who does the copying participate in collusion.

Examples of collusion

The following examples are acts of collusion and should be avoided:

- copying a paragraph from an old assignment submitted by a student in the previous year and submitting the assignment as your own work
- letting a friend copy sections of your assignment and then submit it as their own work
- copying an entire assignment from a fellow student and submitting it as your own work
- allowing a student to copy your entire assignment and submitting as their own work.

To avoid collusion:

- submit your own work in assignments and exams
- don't let fellow students copy even part of your work and submit it as their own work.

How is collusion different to collaboration?

It is important to understand that collaboration and collusion are not the same. **Collaboration** is highly valued at university as a way to **gain deep learning outcomes**. In contrast, **collusion** is viewed as **undermining student learning**.

Collaboration involves:

- sharing and exchanging questions, ideas, understandings, and points of view
- helping each other study and prepare for exams
- talking about readings, lectures and your approach to assignments
- gaining a deeper level of understanding through conversation.

Group-work assignments and collusion

Group-work assignments involve **student collaboration**. Unit materials will clearly outline how group assignments should be completed, including the **role of each student** and **what they need to do** to complete **their share of the task**.

If in doubt, always check with your teacher and ask yourself:

- Have I put in the effort expected of me for this assignment?
- Have I followed assessment guidelines?
- Have I clearly shown where my work ends and others' work begins?

Make sure you read:

[Student Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct Rules](#)