



**THE LITTLE BOOK OF  
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

**What it is and how to avoid it**

**This short booklet is designed to help students to understand what is meant by academic misconduct is, and ways of avoiding doing it.**

**It is important that this document is read in conjunction with any guidance provided by academic departments.**

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## What Is Academic Misconduct?

The University defines Academic Misconduct as

*'any case of deliberate, premeditated cheating, collusion, plagiarism or falsification of information, in an attempt to deceive and gain an unfair advantage in assessment'.*

Assessment includes all forms of written work, designs, ideas, constructions, presentations, demonstrations, viva voces, accreditation of prior learning portfolios, in-class tests and all forms of examination.

Plagiarism is dealt with in a separate booklet which is available at <http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/documents/BOOKOFPLAGIARISM.pdf>.

This booklet is concerned with other forms of academic misconduct.

The Academic Misconduct can take a variety of forms. The major types of academic misconduct are as follows:-

### Cheating

The University Regulations on Examination Procedure state *'that to make use of unfair means in any university examination or test, or to assist another student to make use of such unfair is an academic offence'*. (<http://www.aro.stir.ac.uk/academic/exams/exam-instructions.php>)

This means that the use of pieces of paper with written or printed notes on them, or other such material that may contain notes or prompts of any sort in examinations or class tests is NOT allowed. In some cases examinations may be what are termed 'open book', in these cases the module co-ordinator will make clear what materials are permitted to be taken in to the examination or class test, any other materials are not allowed.

The use of a mobile phone and other electronic devices in an examination, class test, or respite break from an examination is strictly prohibited.

Finally reading from another student's examination or class test answer book is not permitted, nor is talking to another student once the examination or class test as started, unless the activity is specifically permitted.

### Collusion

This can occur particularly where group work is part of the assessment process. In simple terms collusion is when one student produces work and allows another student to copy it. If both students submit the work, BOTH students will be deemed to have colluded.

Collusion differs from **group work** - some coursework assessments will involve students working together on a particular project. Such assessments may require students sharing ideas, research and having a joint responsibility for the development of a project. Group work is designed to build teamwork skills. It will be necessary to collaborate with other members of your group to develop methodology and collect raw data. General discussion of the implications of your results within the

group is also a legitimate activity. However, where a write-up of the work contributes towards formal, individual assessment, any subsequent analyses (statistical or otherwise) of the raw data, presentation of results and all of the written report **MUST** be produced by you alone, and not in collaboration with any other member of your own or other groups. Collaboration at this stage constitutes academic misconduct (collusion). Obviously, these guidelines do not apply to situations where the assessment is based on a single piece of work produced by the group as a whole (e.g. a poster display or a group report).

In practical classes you will often be required to work in groups of two or more. However, any write-up that you hand in must be your own work. If you wish to include other people's words or help, then it is proper to do so, provided the 'piece' to be copied is clearly indicated (for example, by enclosure in quotation marks, with a clear reference which is included in a reference list at the end of the report or paper), and that any help is described clearly and identified. Note: if you attempt to deceive examiners by claiming attendance at prescribed classes that you have **NOT** attended, this is academic misconduct.

If at any time you think you may be in a grey area with regard to collaboration / collusion you must seek advice from the module organiser immediately.

So to summarise:- Assignments for group work, are normally written independently (unless you are told that a group submission is required). It is the student's responsibility to check the assignment instructions for clarification prior to starting the work. Identical assessments will be considered to be **collusion**.

### **Falsification**

Falsification is the intentional and unauthorised fabrication or invention of data, information or references in any formal academic exercise. This is not allowed and is considered to be Academic Misconduct.

Data collected from observations, experiments, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and polls are often used in academic assessments. It is academically dishonest to report anything other than the results obtained using the stated method of data collection.

Falsification includes knowingly reporting data, research, or reports so that either the process or the product is shown to be different from what actually occurred. Falsification also includes submitting work to meet the requirements of one course when it was done, in whole or in part, to meet the requirements of another course. Exceptions to this provision must be given prior approval by the instructor to whom the work is to be submitted ie where a new assignment builds on and develops the theory/research/work submitted in a previous assignment.

In particular, you must not:

- Change or manipulate the method of data collection before the end of the data collection period, unless a full account is provided in the final report
- Change or omit data that has been collected
- Add data collected outside the data collection period
- Add fictitious data
- Or otherwise misrepresent the true results of the data collected.

Attempts to make data fit a particular theory or preferred outcome contravene the basic principles of academic integrity.

### Penalties for Academic Misconduct

The University takes the view that the penalty should be appropriate to the scale of the offence.

The Code of Student Discipline (Ordinance 2 of the University of Stirling Calendar), available at <http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk/documents/ordinances-code-of-student-discipline.pdf>, outlines the broad area of student discipline covering both academic and non-academic misconduct.

Cases which relate to plagiarism, examinations and class tests are covered by the Code of Practice for the Assessment and Examination of Students' Work for Taught Programmes, available at <http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/ac-policy/assessment.php>.

There is a 'penalty points' scheme now operation for academic misconduct offences relating to assessment and examination.

The scheme has three classes of offence as shown in Table 1, Class 1 – for minor offences or where a misunderstanding about what was allowed and what was not, Class 2 – where the offence is major or where collusion was involved, and Class 3 – gross, very serious academic misconduct. The penalty points awarded reflect increasing seriousness of the offence.

**Table 1**

| Classification | Definition/Examples  | Penalty Points |
|----------------|--|----------------|
| 1<br>Minor     | Minor plagiarism<br>Use of unfair means that makes only a minor contribution/advantage due to misunderstanding   | 5              |
| 2<br>Major     | Major plagiarism<br>Collusion<br>Use of unfair means that would allow the student to gain a major advantage  | 10             |
| 3<br>Gross     | Using work that is not your own, i.e. bought/borrowed<br>Circumventing Turnitin<br>Use of unfair means that would allow the student to gain a gross advantage i.e. going to toilet to read notes, using technology to source answers during an exam/class test | 20             |

Table 1 – Classification of Offence and Penalty Points (from <http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/ac-policy/Misconduct.php>)

As you accrue more penalty points so the 'punishment' increases in severity. These penalty points stay on your record for the duration of your programme. They range from a verbal warning to being required to withdraw from your programme of study as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

| <b>Penalty Points Accumulation Scale</b> |   |
|--|---|
| 5  | No change to grade but student is strongly advised and encouraged to undertake the educational process to ensure they understand what plagiarism/exam/class test regulations are. |
| 10                                       | Downgrade assignment/examination/class test by one class i.e. 3A to 4A with no option to resubmit or resit.   |
| 15                                       | Fail module, grade of 5C  |
| 20                                       | Fail module, grade of 5C and unable to graduate with Honours or Masters   |
| 25                                       | Required to withdraw from programme   |

Table 2 – Penalty Points Accumulation Scheme (from <http://www.quality.stir.ac.uk/ac-policy/Misconduct.php>)

Hopefully, you will never get involved in academic misconduct. If you have any doubts then either talk to the module co-ordinator, an Adviser of Studies or a someone in Student Learning Services (email [sls@stir.ac.uk](mailto:sls@stir.ac.uk)).

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**Disclaimer:** Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained within this booklet is correct at the time of publication. The booklet is not intended to be relied upon as the sole source of material and it is the student's responsibility to check the most up to date guidelines provided in their departmental student handbooks.