THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

SEEK WISDOM

AVOIDING ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

What is academic misconduct?

Academic misconduct refers to any activity or practice engaged in by a student that breaches explicit guidelines relating to the production of work for assessment, in a manner that compromises or defeats the purpose of that assessment. It applies to all student work.

This guide identifies common types of misconduct and provides strategies to help you understand and stick to the rules.

Collusion

Collusion occurs when two or more students work together and submit **the same or similar work** as if it were the sole work of the student submitting it.

TIP

Permitting your work to be copied is also collusion and a serious act of academic misconduct. Don't copy another student's work, and don't allow other students to copy your work.

Inappropriate collaboration

Inappropriate collaboration occurs when you work with someone else on an assessment when the lecturer has specified that the work **should be done individually**. Some examples include:
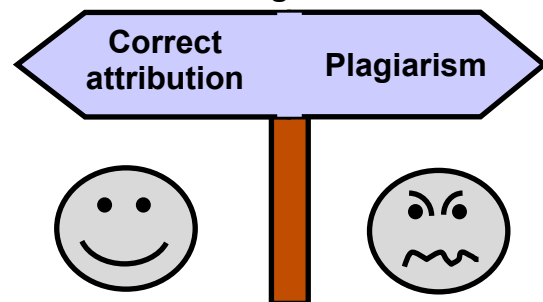- sharing information;
- dividing up an assessment so each student only does a portion of it;
- using someone else's work from a previous year; and
- discussing in-class or take-home exams with other students.

TIP

Avoid inappropriate collaboration by clarifying expectations with your tutor, lecturer or unit coordinator.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the **unattributed** use of someone else's words, creations, ideas or arguments as one's own. At UWA, it is extended to include **paraphrasing** which is **too close to the original**.

TIP

To attribute correctly, **reference** the words, creations, ideas, diagrams, etc. of authors and creators that you have used in your assignments and/or thesis.

Check out the STUDY*Smarter* guides on Avoiding Plagiarism, Quoting and Paraphrasing for further details.

Misrepresenting data

Intentionally misrepresenting data constitutes misconduct. It includes:
- distorting results or a data set by claiming it indicates something that it does not;
- interpreting results inaccurately due to your own biases; and
- representing results or a data set selectively to suit your argument.

Sourcing electronic data inappropriately

In an assessment, this could include using:
- a clip of music or film obtained through an illegal torrent website; or
- an illegally copied picture.

Breaching exam rules to compromise the assessment

Breaching exam rules can constitute academic misconduct, for example:
- sitting an exam for someone else;
- taking unauthorised materials (e.g. notes) into an exam;
- communicating with other students also doing an exam; and
- having your electronic devices switched on during the examination.

"Contract cheating"

Contract cheating occurs when students outsource work and assessments, usually through online providers.

It is serious academic misconduct to:
- **Buy** an assignment written by someone else and submit it as your own work; and
- **Write** an assignment for someone to pass as their own, even if you don't get paid.

> **TIP**
>
> Be careful about websites (especially paid ones) that claim to support student learning but are actually providing students with an unfair advantage in their assessments.

Ways to avoid academic misconduct

Not all academic misconduct is intentional. Sometimes it occurs when a student feels stressed about an assignment or exam. To avoid this, try to carefully **manage your workload** and **assignment deadlines**.

> **TIP**
>
> If you consider the ideas in your assignments as part of a conversation with other authors and thinkers, it will be natural to show, by referencing correctly, how your ideas relate to theirs.

You can also prevent academic misconduct by developing **safe study practices**:
- Record bibliographic details, including page numbers, whenever you take notes;
- Distinguish your ideas and paraphrases from direct quotes when making notes;
- Change the words and structure of sentences when paraphrasing but keep the same logic and meaning; and
- Reference all of your drafts rather than leaving referencing until the final draft.

> **TIP**
>
> Instances of student academic misconduct will be subject to the University's academic integrity policies, processes and academic sanctions.
>
> For more information, see the guides listed below and the online UWA unit Academic Conduct Essentials (ACE).

Like this Survival Guide? Why not check out more of our guides...
Paraphrasing, Quoting, Using Turnitin and Avoiding Plagiarism.

Want to know more about STUDY*Smarter*?
Find out about all our services and resources at: www.studysmarter.uwa.edu.au

Any suggestions?
We would love to hear from you. Email us at studysmarter@uwa.edu.au

This resource was developed by the STUDY*Smarter* team for UWA students. When using our resources, please retain them in their original form with both the STUDY*Smarter* heading and the UWA logo.