GUIDANCE ON MAINTAINING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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GUIDANCE ON MAINTAINING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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Guidance on maintaining academic integrity

1. **Introduction**

    1.1. The [International Centre for Academic Integrity](#) defines academic integrity as *"a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage"*.

    1.2. All students studying at the University of Strathclyde (hereafter referred to as the University) are expected to embrace these values fully and consistently in their conduct and work at and/or in association with the University. This expectation and the guidance presented here apply to all undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research, work-based students, visiting students and those studying short courses of any kind.

    1.3. Opportunities to commit intended and unintended academic misconduct have evolved and proliferated with the development of technology and changes to assessment practice. Therefore, it is important that the University consistently encourages and supports academic integrity and good academic practice among students and strives to identify and investigate all allegations of academic misconduct.

    1.4. The Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) [Academic Integrity Charter for UK Higher Education](#) sets the expectation that the promotion and maintenance of academic integrity is an important part of the work of all staff across the University. Therefore, the University expects that to promote and maintain academic integrity, staff should collaborate to ensure that every reasonable effort is made to prevent, detect, investigate, and monitor and report the incidence of academic misconduct.

2. **What is Academic misconduct?**

    2.1. Academic misconduct is the outcome of conduct that breaches, either intentionally or unintentionally, any of the University's standards or expectations around academic integrity, which are set in the [University's Academic Policies and Procedures](#).

    2.2. More specifically, academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

        a. **plagiarism** (including intentionally or unintentionally using someone else's work

without appropriate acknowledgement, and self-plagiarism or duplication);

b. **collusion** (including working with others to prepare for or complete any assessment where this has been prohibited, or knowingly allowing work to be accessed or copied, or supply work to a third party to facilitate plagiarism);

c. **false candidature or impersonation** (including undertaking any assessment on behalf of someone else, arranging for an assessment to be undertaken by another party, or procuring and/or submitting part or the whole of work undertaken by a third party);

d. **fabrication** or deliberate **misrepresentation** of any information;

e. **cheating** in any assessment by working in ways or accessing information not permitted by the terms of that assessment;

f. **false declarations**; and,

g. offering or accepting any kind of **bribe** or issuing any kind of **threat** to another individual or group in relation to assessments at and/or in association with the University.

2.3. Illustrative examples of each of these forms of academic misconduct are provided in Appendix 1. Please note that this table of examples is not exhaustive.

3. Prevention

3.1. The University believes that some instances of academic misconduct can be prevented through appropriate guidance and support for staff and students.

3.2. In designing curricula and assessments, Departments/Schools must promote academic integrity through teaching, assessment, and support activities.

3.3. Departments/Schools must provide students with opportunities to consider what constitutes appropriate academic conduct and scholarship generally and in their specific disciplinary context. It is advised that students are regularly reminded of these expectations, particularly as they prepare to undertake assessments.

3.4. To ensure that students fully understand what constitutes (and what might undermine) academic integrity, Departments/Schools should:

a. include relevant and accessible information about academic integrity and academic misconduct in relevant handbooks and materials provided to students in hard copy and online (e.g., via MyPlace);
b. ensure students are provided with opportunities to discuss acceptable and

unacceptable conduct and develop their understanding in discipline-specific contexts;

c. be consistent, clear, and explicit about any resources or services or practices that are prohibited;

d. offer specific guidance on the difference between working collaboratively and colluding, to ensure that students understand how learning with and from their peers and others (e.g., through peer-review exercises) differs from collusion and are aware of the circumstances in which working collaboratively is prohibited;

e. ensure students are aware of expectations around referencing and are provided with and informed of appropriate opportunities to develop their ability to reference accurately (e.g. University Library resources and services);

f. signpost and refer appropriately to resources and services offered to students to enhance their academic practice by the University Library, Learner Development Services, and English Language Teaching Services.

g. consider using Learner Agreements to communicate expectations around conduct and scholarship;

h. consider whether efforts are required to address issues that can be anticipated in their Department/School (e.g., confusion over the difference between effective group working and collusion; the need to reinforce ideas of academic integrity with postgraduate students intending to publish research; the issue of self-plagiarism; or the need to provide support and training to students adjusting to a new academic culture);

i. encourage and regularly remind students to contact the University for support and assistance should they find themselves in difficult circumstances where incidences of academic misconduct are more likely to occur; and,

j. inform students when appropriate of the nature and extent of the penalties applied in cases of academic misconduct (see the University's *Student Discipline Procedure: Academic Misconduct*).

3.5. Whenever expectations around conduct and academic practice differ from what is considered 'normal practice' in a particular context, such as in assessed group work requiring collaboration or in open-book examinations which may permit students to access information or resources, students should be supported to better understand and cope with these differences. This is particularly important where a new or different approach to assessment has been introduced to students (e.g., dissertation) which could lead to confusion or misunderstanding.

3.6. Students should be informed that they are responsible for ensuring that the work they submit is their own. The University does not deem it acceptable for a student to submit wholly or partly plagiarised work and retrospectively claim that the submission did not represent the final version of the work when academic misconduct has been alleged.

3.7. In some circumstances, at the discretion of the Programme Director or nominee, it may be appropriate to allow students to utilise the reporting tools in Turnitin in preparing their work for submission or as part of a lesson on academic misconduct. See *Guidelines for the Use of Turnitin* for further information.

3.8. Where a Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requires the reporting of instances of academic misconduct and where any 'fitness to practice' conditions apply, students should be reminded of this at relevant points in their studies and informed of the potential impact of a proven charge of academic misconduct on their progression and post-graduation options.

4. Detection

4.1. The University understands that some instances of academic misconduct will emerge despite efforts to prevent it.

4.2. The primary responsibility for detecting all forms of academic misconduct rests with Departments/Schools, and may include the involvement of students, colleagues in other Departments/Schools, and relevant external parties such as invigilators and external examiners.

4.3. The University and Departments/Schools should provide staff with up-to-date information, support, and training to allow them to identify incidences and manage allegations of academic misconduct fairly and consistently.

4.4. To aid Departments/Schools in the increasingly challenging task of identifying incidences of academic misconduct, the University encourages the use of Turnitin plagiarism detection software wherever possible and appropriate. Turnitin checks students' work and highlights elements that appear to duplicate material held on its database. Turnitin reports are a resource staff can use to identify and investigate potential cases of academic misconduct but do not, either immediately or on their own, prove or disprove any allegation of academic misconduct. See *Guidelines for the Use of Turnitin* for further information.

4.5. Departments/Schools must inform students when plagiarism detection software is being used.

4.6. Departments/Schools should ensure that students can confidentially report suspicions of academic misconduct and that they are assured that these allegations will be handled sensitively and appropriately. Departments/Schools should promote the University's Report and Support online reporting facility for this purpose.

5. Investigating allegations

5.1. The University expects that all allegations of academic misconduct will be fairly and fully investigated in line with the University's *Student Discipline Procedure:*

5.2. Allegations of academic misconduct must be investigated on a case-by-case basis, and care should be taken to determine whether any academic misconduct has occurred on the balance of probabilities.

5.3. The nature or type of assessment activity should not be taken as either an aggravating or mitigating factor in investigating allegations of academic misconduct or in imposing penalties where such allegations are upheld.

5.4. The procedure for investigating suspected academic misconduct is set out in the University's *Student Discipline Procedure: Academic Misconduct*. Staff should refer to this procedure when deciding upon an appropriate course of action in each case. Appendix 2 of this Guidance offers useful definitions of incidences that could be considered minor cases of academic misconduct.

5.5. Where academic misconduct is suspected, the student's submission(s) should be marked taking no account of the alleged academic misconduct. Under any subsequent disciplinary procedures, and depending upon the severity of the incident, an authorised Misconduct Officer or the Senate Discipline Committee may impose appropriate academic penalties where an allegation of academic misconduct is upheld.

5.6. In all cases, evidence of relevant mitigating factors presented by the student must be considered within the procedure. The burden of proof used by the University in cases of alleged academic misconduct is that of the balance of probability, which is taken to mean the likelihood, given the evidence available and based on the professional judgement of the individuals assessing the case, of the Reported Student having committed intentional or unintentional academic misconduct in a given and defined situation.

6. Reporting and monitoring

6.1. The University takes academic misconduct of any kind seriously and wishes to record and monitor its incidence to inform efforts aimed at prevention, detection, and investigation.

6.2. Where academic misconduct is alleged, the appointed Misconduct Officer must follow the *Student Discipline Procedure: Academic Misconduct*. A written note of the Stage One Investigation meeting must be agreed upon with the student and a copy should be kept by the student's Department/School along with relevant reports and evidence so that it can be consulted in the event of further and/or related disciplinary action or in determining aggravating factors should there be any allegation of

academic misconduct relating to the same student in the future.

6.3. To ensure the University has oversight of the incidence of academic misconduct, the Chair or Manager of the Quality Assurance Committee may request that Faculties report on the type, frequency, and distribution of instances of academic misconduct encountered and the penalties applied in each case in a given academic year.

6.4. Other than in cases where there may be concerns around 'fitness to practice', Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies should not be informed of alleged incidences of academic misconduct on programmes to which they are connected until the conclusion of the University's Procedure, to avoid unnecessary and potentially damaging reporting in cases where an allegation is not upheld.

7. Further information and guidance

7.1. Further information and guidance on the *Student Discipline Procedure: Academic Misconduct* can be accessed by visiting the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Team's SharePoint site (https://strath.sharepoint.com/sites/qeat/) or by email (senate-discipline@strath.ac.uk).

Appendix 1: Types of academic misconduct with examples

Type of academic misconduct	Including, but not limited to
Plagiarism	Using someone else's work (e.g., words, ideas, results, tables, or diagrams) without appropriate acknowledgement, including direct verbatim copying, paraphrasing, and summarising. This includes the use of any service which supplies or allows access to all or part of a submission, manual or automated 'synonymised plagiarism' techniques, software, services, or artificial intelligence, and any other practice which aims to circumvent or avoid plagiarism detection by staff and systems through disguising or rephrasing all or part of the work of another party. Submitting partly or in its entirety the same piece of work for two different assessments in the same or different degree programme in any Higher Education Institution. Self-plagiarism should be treated as plagiarism.
Collusion	Working collaboratively to prepare for or complete an assessment with others or allowing work to be accessed or copied, where this has been explicitly prohibited, including uploading or distributing online any University materials used in teaching, any work submitted as part of a University programme, and/or any feedback of any kind on submitted work with the intent to enable others to commit academic misconduct at the University or elsewhere.
False candidature or impersonation	Impersonating another student in an examination or engaging someone else to take one's place in an examination or undertaking a piece of coursework for another student or commissioning someone else to undertake a piece of coursework in one's place, such as the use of 'essay mills' or equivalent.
Fabrication or deliberate misrepresentation of information	Presentation of any information (e.g., data, results, statistics, or references) which has been invented or manipulated with the intent to mislead.
Cheating in assessments	Illicit copying or communicating, accessing, or possessing prohibited materials, and the unapproved use of electronic devices or services to store, retrieve, access, or manipulate information.
False declaration	Making a false declaration to receive special consideration by an Examination Board/Committee or Appeals Committee or to obtain extensions to deadlines or exemption from work.
Bribery or Threat	Offering or accepting a bribe of any kind or threatening another party in relation to any activity at or in association with the University.

Appendix 2: Examples of minor academic misconduct

Every case of alleged academic misconduct is potentially serious. Each case should be considered on its own merits, taking all mitigating and aggravating circumstances into account. Examples of incidences of alleged academic misconduct (which might be considered minor infringements because of the circumstances) are given below.

Example	Scenario
2.1	In their first assignment, a first-year student does not put quotation marks around a passage taken from published work, or to cite its author in the text… but does give the reference in the bibliography. This could be seen as an example of poor scholarship and the student should be informed of this and offered support, including referring them to the Learner Development Services and University Library for advice on referencing and good academic practice.
2.2	Several students have discussed their first piece of group work, and some use the same arguments and examples in a related individual submission without acknowledging that these were developed collectively. This could be the result of not understanding how the particular piece of group work is to be assessed and might be addressed by referring the students to appropriate guidance or support on group working from the Department/School or University services.
2.3	A student in their second year includes without acknowledgement a table taken from the slides provided by the lecturer in their submission for an online examination. It could be that the student has not understood that plagiarism applies also to diagrams and tables as well as text, or that materials provided to them through teaching should also be acknowledged. Again, this may be addressed with support and guidance and if necessary, referral to University services. However, similar instances of poor scholarship in the work of students in their third or fourth year of study, or the work of students, at whatever stage of study, who have already been called in for a discussion of similar issues might require a greater penalty.
2.4	A student has included a few short extracts (one or two lines) which are not cited or in quotation marks and which are not in the bibliography, but the bulk of the work is properly referenced. This could just be sloppy scholarship resulting from inadequate notetaking or oversight and the student could be referred to the Learner Development Services for advice on good academic practice. In circumstances where the student has included whole paragraphs, extended sections of texts, tables, and diagrams without acknowledgement, it might be necessary to consider a more formal investigation and a greater penalty.
2.5	A student has brought unauthorised material into the exam hall. This has been placed in full sight on the desk and there is no evidence in the examination script that the student has referred to it during the examination and no evidence that the student intended to deceive. This could just be an oversight and the student could be admonished and reminded of the regulations governing attendance at examinations. However, if the student has tried to conceal the unauthorised material and there is evidence in the examination script that it may have been referred to then that will require a greater penalty.